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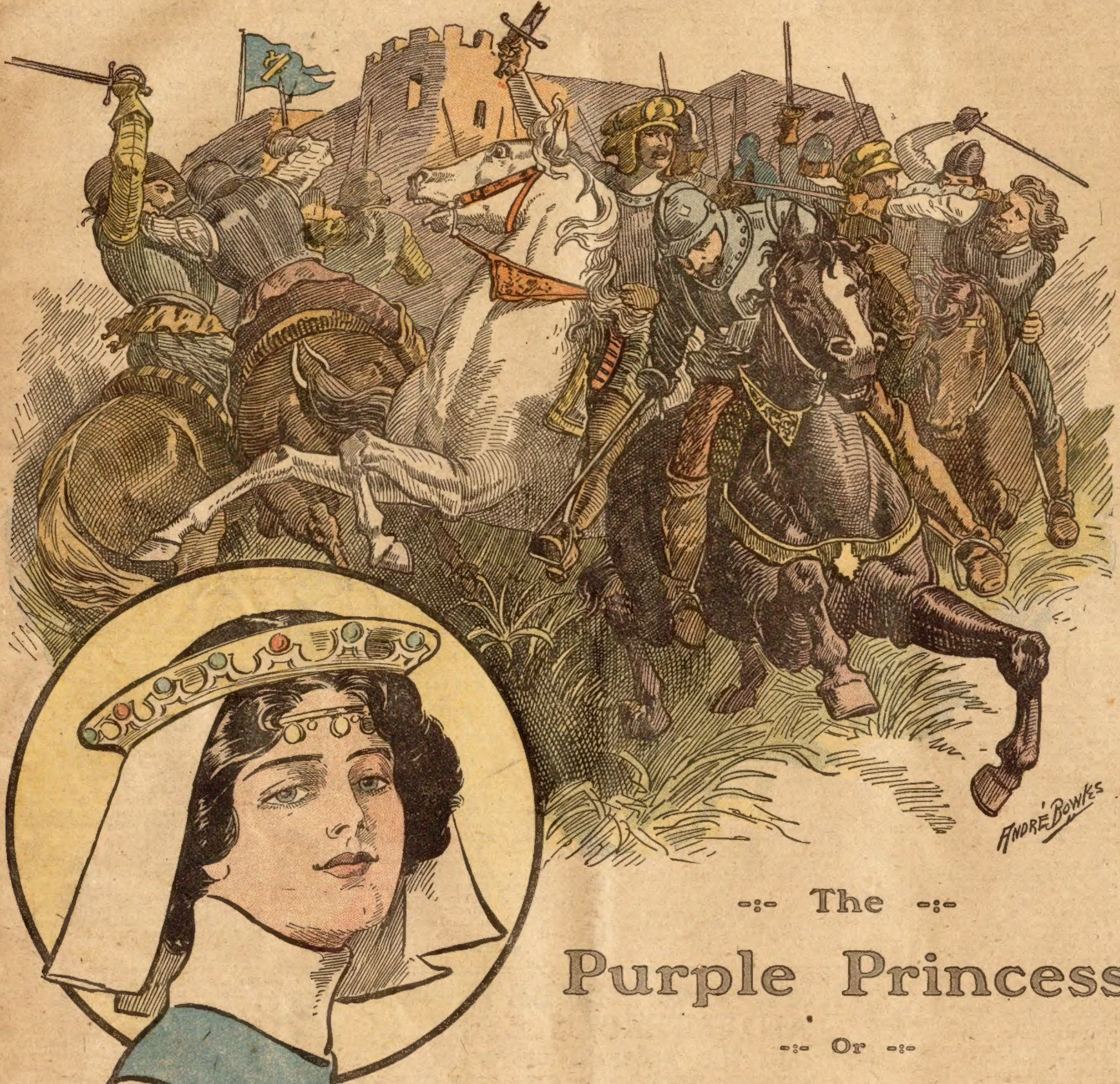
CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XLII, NO. 35. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 1914. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS

J. Moran
6Jan15



The

Purple Princess

Or

An Emperor's Last Love

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER I.

BEAUTY IN A PASSION.

AMID the glories of a Rhinish sunset, a beautiful woman, clad in the richest purple and mounted on a snow-white steed, was slowly approaching an elevated castle, fortress-like in appearance. Ever and anon she turned her haughty head and looked down upon the lovely valley she had just left.

She was entirely unattended, but this circumstance had not disquieted her. The fortress-castle which she was nearing was the home of her ancestors. It had withstood the tempests and sieges of a century, and its strong walls bore the scars of more than one assault by the robber barons of the fifteenth century.

The reign of the titled outlaws was not yet over. They spurned the laws of God and laughed at the rule of the Emperor Francis. Each robber baron could muster a small army of retainers, who, when they were not spearing the wild boar, were plundering the rich castles along the Rhine.

As yet, Eudora, or the Purple Princess, as she was called, had not felt the beaks of these marauding vultures. The walls of the Gray Fortress were strong, and her armed men were ever on the lookout for the miscreants.

It is true she had received more than one warning, but with a toss of her pretty head she had laughed them to scorn, laughed even at the threat of Black Karl, who, over his wine in Coblenz, had vowed to swoop down upon the lofty retreat and carry her off.

The Emperor had offered to help her against the enemy, but she had returned the offer, saying that when she was not strong enough to defend herself, she would dismantle the fortress and take the veil.

On the occasion of which we write, the Purple Princess pursued her way up the steep acclivity which ended at the castle, upon which the last rays of a September sun were falling. When a little nearer she lifted a silver horn from her girdle and sounded a far-reaching and musical note. Instantly the walls of Castle Marx swarmed with men, and the heavy drawbridge came clanking down over the moat. Eudora rode through the open gate and into the castle yard. She had a smile for those who had served her so well, and they replied with hearty cheers.

Dismounting without aid, she threw the lines to one of the servants, and went instantly to her boudoir. It was a beautiful chamber adorned with all the richness of the times and everything indicated the wealth of the household of Marx. The young girl—for she was not more than one and twenty—threw off her riding wraps and, summoning a servant, bade him bring her a glass of her favorite wine, which she sipped as she looked up into the maid's face.

"Any news, Mina?" she inquired.

The maid's face reddened.

"Tell me all," commanded Eudora, with a little harshness in her tones. "Who has been here?"

"I know not what he calls himself," was the reply. "He is no good man, I am sure."

The Purple Princess was immediately interested.

"He left this, my mistress," pursued Mina, going to a little table at one corner of the room, and taking from beneath a missal a folded note. With the paper in her hand, she returned to Eudora, who took it from her in silence.

"The villain!" she suddenly exclaimed, her face now as pale as the cold moon which had just topped the German hills. "Does he think to court me thus?" and to the maid's surprise the letter was torn into a thousand bits and flung at the beauty's feet.

Mina did not speak.

"Came the man alone, girl?" demanded Eudora.

"Quite alone," was the reply. "I know not what he said to Dagobert, who was at the gate, and when he rode haughtily away, Dagobert handed me the message."

"That will do, girl."

When Mina had retired, the Princess Eudora sprang to her feet, her face almost the hue of the rich mantle she wore, and for a moment she stood in the middle of the room with clinched hands.

"The black-winged vulture!" she almost hissed. "Does he think I would mate with one of his kind?"

She paced the floor like an enraged tigress. Now and then she spurned the fragments of the letter with her foot, and rushing suddenly from the apartment, appeared on the battlement that overlooked the moonlit valley.

Not far away flowed the Rhine, its waves tipped with silver, and above it rose the mountains she had loved from her earliest days. It was a scene calculated to bring back the delights of her childhood, and while she gazed upon it a soft light filled her deep, dark eyes, and she smiled.

"I am not for you, Black Karl," she suddenly exclaimed. "The dove does not mate with the vulture. I am the daughter of old Prince Segrist, and I will not stoop to shame. Would to Heaven I had been here when your menial came. I would have marked his face with my sword and sent him back to his master. Your wife?" and she laughed till the echo came back to her from the sleeping caverns along the river.

Turning from the wall, she summoned into her presence Dagobert, the captain of her guard, and for a moment transfixed him with angry gaze.

"What was the wolf like, Dagobert?" she asked.

"Much like his master," was the man's reply.

"Big or little?"

"A medium-sized man, but with the strength of a bull. I never saw such arms."

"His name?"

"Gonrod, I think he said."

"And you took the message?"

"Yes, mistress. I thought you would like to see it."

"I have seen it, Dagobert. I have torn it into strips." Her eyes were flashing again. "I wish I had returned in time to have answered the wretch as he deserves to be answered. But never mind, good Dagobert. I don't censure you. How many men have we?"

Captain Dagobert reflected a moment.

"We have three hundred, my lady."

"And the arms?"

"All are in good condition. I have but lately overhauled them."

"Good! That is all."

Dagobert went away, but on the staircase he paused and looked back.

"I thought the message came from Black Karl," he said under his breath. "If my lady wants a good, strong lord, she might do worse than by refusing Black Karl. They call him the Wolf of the Rhine, but he can protect from every foe my lovely mistress. He doesn't fear even the Emperor, who is said to be wife hunting. I don't like him. 'Tis said that the late Empress died of neglect, and Francis hasn't a heart to do one a real pleasure," and with this Dagobert went down the stair and out into the open court.

At almost the same moment there emerged from the forest below the castle a young man who bestrode a black horse that seemed proud of his master. This personage was not past his twenty-fifth year, a handsome youth who held his head high, and now and then pushed back from his lofty brow a wealth of dark locks with which the night wind toyed joyously. His face was fastened on the gloomy pile that overtopped the Rhine, as if he expected to see a certain face on the battlements.

"I see her not," he said to himself, in low tones. Can it be that I am not to find her in the castle?"

He rode on till he was at the edge of the wood which now separated him from the moat, and was about to shout to the seneschal on duty when he heard a sound at his right. As he turned his head, he was set upon by four lusty, dark-faced fellows, who rushed forward with loud cries.

"'Tis he!" cried the foremost rascal, a strapping lout who was armed with a broadsword. "At him, my hearties! Hew him down and leave but strips for the ravens!"

"If you can!" challenged the youth, drawing his sword, which in an instant flashed madly above his head. "You will find Marc of Coblenz ready for all the foul birds that beset him. Come on!" and he swept his blade before their faces in such a manner that for a moment they were disconcerted.

Marc of Coblenz was not to escape so easily. The four rascals soon recovered their equipoise, and were soon back at the assault. The battle now raged furiously, the youth dealing some excellent blows, and two of his assailants were soon hors de combat. But the young man had not escaped the vengeance of the spears and swords wielded by his adversaries. He had been struck in many places, and blood ran down his cheeks. All at once he broke through the battle line, and with a cry for help, spurred his steed toward the fortress.

He was tottering in his seat, and his blade shook in his hand. Suddenly the drawbridge dropped heavily across the moat, and Marc of Coblenz darted through the gate. In another moment he fell into the arms of Dagobert with a deep moan.

"Who did this?" cried a woman who suddenly appeared upon the scene, her eyes aflame with indignation and her tresses fluttering in the night wind.

"God knows!" answered Dagobert. "'Tis Marc of Coblenz, and he cannot speak."

"Take him to my chamber," commanded the Purple Princess. "Summon the leech at once," and then, clinching her white hands, she exclaimed in tones that all heard:

"Woe to the vultures of the Rhine! Woe even to the Emperor, if through him this dastardly deed was done!"

CHAPTER II.

THE IMPERIAL LOVER.

IN ALL Germany there was no handsomer man than the Emperor Francis. Perfect in form, strong as a lion and active, he was a man to look upon with admiration. In his thirty-fourth year he had been five years on the throne, and in that time had a name which was known all over the world.

He had but lately lost his empress, the beautiful and gentle Mary, and, as all knew, was now looking for her successor. There were imperial princesses who would be glad to share the throne with him, but though he had journeyed to various kingdoms in search of a second mate, he had returned to his palace unsatisfied. There were dark rumors concerning the death of the Empress. It was said that she had been neglected until sorrow furrowed her fair cheeks, and there were those who whispered that she had been helped out of the world by some subtle poison.

There were those in the empire who dealt in such terrible things; there were black-robed men who brewed the deadly philters, poisons which left no trace behind, and the grave never divulged the terrible secret.

All understood that the lady upon whom Francis finally set his affections could not escape his clutches. No matter what her rank was, nor how strong her castle, she would have to give in to his wooing whether love went with it or not.

On more than one occasion the Emperor had traveled incognito in search of a wife. He chose various names, and played any role that suited his royal fancy.

The fame and beauty of the Purple Princess had already reached his ears. He had seen her at a fete in Frankfort, and her witchery had won him. But he felt that the beauty of Castle Marx would reject his advances. He must win her by force, if at all, and thereupon he set his wits to work to secure this rich prize.

His one visit to the fortress-castle had only deepened his desires. Eudora had received him as became one of his subjects, but she had not unbent, for she saw behind the tinsel of royalty and divined the purport of his coming.

It was three nights before the events we have just described that the Emperor sat alone in his private chamber in his palace. His mien suggested that he was waiting for some one, and a smile settled on his countenance when the door opened and a man strode forward.

"You have had me on a bed of nettles," said Francis, as he greeted his caller, who made his obeisance with courtly grace. "I have been awaiting this hour."

"I am sorry, your majesty," was the reply. "I came as soon as the message reached me."

"Where did the lout tarry?" growled the Emperor.

"I know not, sire."

"I'll strip him of his uniform for this torture! I am not the man to have snails in his household," and then he turned to Count Soldan, who was his companion.

"You have come back from Coblenz?" he went on anxiously. "You have obeyed my commands?"

"When did Martin of Metz fail your majesty?"

"Never to my knowledge," smiled the Emperor. "What did you discover?"

"The Princess Eudora has two lovers."

Francis almost darted to his feet. His face was purple.

"Two, you say, Count?" he cried, clinching his hands. "In the name of Heaven, what does this mean?"

"A beautiful creature like the Purple Princess is liable to have a bevy of swains."

"True, but I will not stand it! She is for me," and the ruler's cheeks suddenly lost color. "I will not play second fiddle to such a divine woman. I am the Emperor and I brook no rival."

Count Soldan did not reply to this imperial outburst. Rascal and time server he was, accounted the best swordsman in Germany, a man without a conscience, libertine and villain, always ready to serve where there was gold for his purse.

"Tell me about these two varlets," continued the Emperor, leaning forward. "Name them to me, and by all the saints, Count, I'll send you on a mission that will yellow your pocket."

Soldan made a grimace and rubbed his dangerous hands gleefully.

"The first," said he, "is the young Marc of Coblenz."

"What, that hanger-on?" broke in the Emperor. "Dare he lift his eyes to the Purple Princess?"

"He dares, your majesty."

"I'll crush him like that!" roared Francis, snatching a golden egg from the table and breaking it in his iron grip. "I'll pluck this young eagle of all his feathers, and he shall regret the day he crossed his Emperor's path. But who is the other lover, Count?"

"It is Black Karl."

"Ha! the robber of the Rhine?" laughed Francis. "Another pretty raven, by my soul! What delectable jewels the Lady Eudora has on her string! If she had dragged the purlieus of my empire she could not have found two more ignoble beasts. Black Karl, say ye, Count? And what does the Purple Princess think of them?"

"For Black Karl I think she cares little; for Marc of Coblenz she cares much."

"Hell and furies!" leaped in venomous sounds from the Emperor's lips. "And I am to lie still and see one of these reptiles carry off the prize? Where are they now?"

"Black Karl is on his old stamping ground in the Dark Forest, and Marc is to be found in the cafes of Coblenz when he is not making love to the Princess."

This astonishing information was more than Francis could stand. He sprang from his chair and began to pace the apartment, stamping on the floor as if he would break the boards. Count Soldan heard the grinding of the madman's teeth, and saw the lightning that took possession of his eyes. When Francis was angry he was a tempest of passion. The Count waited quietly till he sobered down and returned to his chair.

"Are you afraid of this young fellow?" he suddenly asked, turning to his companion. "Are you beholden to him in any manner?"

"In no way, your majesty," was the reply.

"You swear it, Count?"

"Upon the tomb of my mother."

"That is good. How often does he make pilgrimages to Castle Marx?"

"He goes thither once a week."

"And you know the night?"

"It was my duty to know it."

"You are right," smiled Francis. "Now!"

The Emperor crossed the room again and opened a hidden recess in the wall. He thrust his hand in and drew out a chased pistol, with which he came back to the table. He laid the weapon on the embroidered cloth.

"See that Marc of Coblenz fails in his love-making," said he, and his meaning could not be misunderstood. "I need say no more.'

The weapon was pushed forward, but Count Soldan declined it with a significant gesture.

"What! Do you decline it?" snapped Francis.

"I have my sword, your majesty," was the reply. "There is none better in Germany."

"And no truer eye than yours, I know. If you want help——"

"I know where it is to be found," was the interruption. "What is to be done with Black Karl?"

"I can settle with this forest wolf," grimaced Francis. "I can break this wild beast. It is for you to deal with Marc of Coblenz. Come to me with a good report, and I'll make you the greatest man in Germany save myself."

With this the Emperor took a heavy purse from a drawer in the table and flung it into Soldan's lap.

"I think that is all," he went on, as the Count stowed the gold beneath his garb and rose to his feet. "This young upstart dare come between me and the Purple Princess, eh? I am lord of Germany, I am the Emperor. I am master of the mightiest kingdom in the world, and now a shadow comes. Go, Soldan! Go and report success, no matter how you obtain it."

Francis waited impatiently till the door had closed behind the Count, then he tapped a silver bell on the table and a liveried boy entered the room.

"Flamobert," he said, in quick tones, and the youth scampered away.

A moment later the door opened again, and an old man with a flowing white beard hobbled forward.

"What is the latest?" asked the Emperor with tense eagerness. "Are they gossiping yet?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"The serpents," hissed Francis. "And do they still say that the late Empress was hurried out of the world?"

"Aye, that they do," was the low reply. "And they also say that your majesty is already seeking another empress, that, in time, you may send her after the good Mary."

"The——"

The sentence was not finished, for Francis was choking with rage.

The old man averted his head and grinned like a fiend.

"I wish all these reptiles had but one head that I might sever it at one stroke!" the Emperor suddenly roared, having caught his breath. "They say you are imbued with supernatural powers, Flamobert. You hold communion with the stars. Have you ever cast your Emperor's horoscope?"

"I have, your majesty. But I—I——"

"No more! Leave the room, dog! Get back to your kennel, or by God's wounds, I'll see you at my feet a heap of pulseless clay!" and Flamobert, the spy, recoiled from the point of the sword which the Emperor had whipped from its jeweled scabbard.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OUTSIDE.

FOR three days Marc of Coblenz had the best nurse in the world. His wounds healed rapidly under Lady Eudora's ceaseless care; he could look into her eyes and see there the glowing light of love, and to be loved by such a woman was heaven.

Whenever she questioned him concerning his adventure almost at the gates of Castle Marx, he became strangely reticent, and averted his face or turned the conversation most adroitly. But the Purple Princess was determined.

Read "THE PURPLE PRINCESS; or, 'AN EMPEROR'S LAST LOVE," and the splendid new boys' story, "THE YOUNG GUARDSMAN; or, JACK WINSLOW AT WATERLOO," in this issue. Next week's leading story will be "RED DICK O'LAUGHLIN; or, THE CHIHUAHUA TRAIL," a most interesting story by Stephen Gaillard, author of "FRONTIVARD, THE TERRIBLE." Read it. It will pay you richly. Look out for some great new features in future issues of this magazine.

It was not until the fourth night that she had her way, and they were standing on the west battlement, from which a grand view of the Rhine was to be had. It looked like a great serpent of silver gliding on in the soft moonlight, and now and then a light flashed out from a boat bound for Coblenz. They could almost hear the dip of oars, for the night was full of wonderful echoes, and overhead hung a curtain of stars such as shine only on the Rhine.

Lady Eudora, who had charmed Marc with a German song, ceased suddenly and laid her hand on his arm.

"You can speak now," said she, in a sweet voice fraught with a woman's pleadings. "You say you were attacked by four ruffians?"

"By four," answered the youth.

"And you bested all!" she exclaimed proudly. "You fought them bravely, and left at least two on the field, as Dagobert discovered when he returned from the battle ground."

Marc smiled.

"I did not get to finish the ringleader," he resumed. "Fate, I presume, spared him for another encounter."

"If you but recognized him."

"I fancy I shall know him if our paths ever cross again," and then the speaker seemed to regret his admission.

"You know him?" cried the Princess. "I am glad of that. A ruffian like his fellows."

Marc of Coblenz saw that he had gone too far. There was but one way out of the dilemma with the lustrous eyes of Lady Eudora fixed upon him, and that was to tell the whole story.

"The ringleader," he pursued, "was not a bravo like those he led. I had seen him before the encounter of that night. He was one of the Emperor's attendants when his majesty last visited Coblenz."

Lady Eudora started.

"Say you so!" she exclaimed. "One of the Emperor's entourage? And in a melee like that?"

"Aye, my love. Once seen, Count Soldan is not soon forgotten."

The beautiful face before him lost color.

"I have heard of this man," the Purple Princess said. "A man who serves Francis like a slave, and asks no questions. So he led the ruffians who attacked you?"

Marc bent his head.

"I shall not forget," Lady Eudora went on. "I shall remember that Count Soldan led the miscreants."

He seemed to divine her inmost thoughts; he felt that she believed he was keeping back from her that which he would not divulge, but she had robbed him of his secret.

At that moment the clear notes of a horn floated up to them, and seemed to die away along the rampart.

"A horseman yonder," cried the Princess, pointing to a moving object beneath them. "Is he not riding toward the main gate?"

By this time Marc of Coblenz had caught sight of the hurrying figure and was watching it closely.

"Why comes the man to Castle Marx at this time? He is not one of my retainers, for Dagobert has just said that all were within the walls. Let us hasten below and see what message he brings from the outside world."

In a few moments they stood in the spacious court of the castle and Lady Eudora was ordering Dagobert to the main gate.

"Know first who the man is," she was saying. "Question him closely before the drawbridge is lowered. We want no spies in the fortress tonight."

The unknown rider had already reached the brink of the moat, where he had reined in his foamy charger, and was calling upon the guards to lower the draw. Dagobert mounted to a porthole above the heavy gate, and was answering the man's call.

"I am from the Emperor," was the reply which sent a thrill through every one who heard. "I come direct from his majesty, and would have speech with the Lady Eudora."

"With me?" exclaimed the Purple Princess. "A courier from the Emperor Francis?" and she strode to where Captain Dagobert stood.

"Ask him why he comes," she said. "It is past the hour to open the gate to any one and——"

"But, my lady," said Dagobert, looking over his shoulder, "a messenger from the Emperor must be received at all times."

"Hush! Am I not mistress here, and is not Castle Marx my fortress?" came back to him with the speed of thought. "Ask him why he has ridden from his majesty."

Dagobert bit his lip and returned to the port.

"The Princess Eudora would know why his majesty has sent you to the castle?" he asked.

The man outside seemed to lift himself from the saddle.

"I have no converse with a menial!" he cried raspingly. "I come from the throne and——"

"Let me talk to him," interrupted Eudora, and Dagobert relinquished his post.

In another second the white face of the Purple Princess appeared at the circle.

"I am Lady Eudora of Marx," said she, in ringing tones. "I demand to know the purport of this unexpected mission. You will tell me what your long ride means."

"By my life, this is a strange proceeding!" all heard the rider say. "Is not the Emperor's business the open sesame to every castle in Germany?"

"It is not so to Castle Marx unless I choose to obey," was the startling defiance. "Why ride ye hither?"

"I bear a written message from the Emperor Francis to the Princess Eudora."

"Peace or war?"

"Think ye the Emperor Francis wars with ladies?"

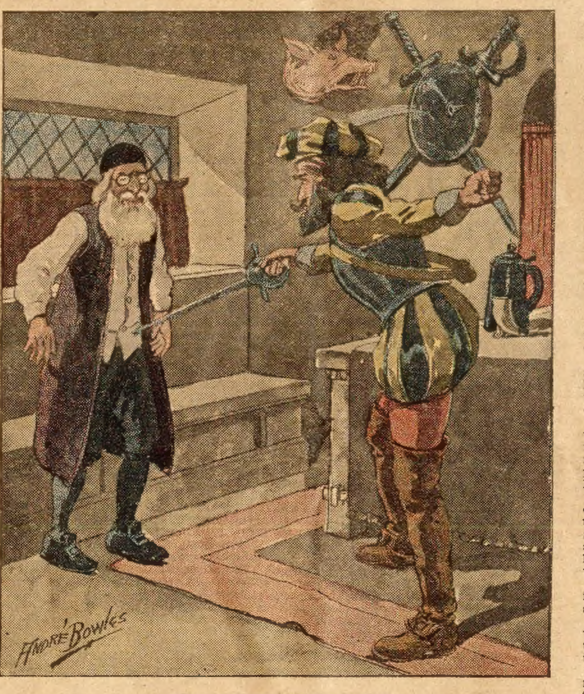
"I am not a custodian of his secrets," taunted Lady Eudora. "If you will raise your message to the port on the point of your good sword, it will be considered."

Marc of Coblenz could not but start at the Princess' coolness.

Grudgingly the man outside drew his blade and attached to it a white object from which was seen to dangle a seal that glistened in the moonlight. Lady Eudora reached out her jeweled hand and took it from the steel.

"A light!" she cried, turning to Dagobert. "We will see what are the wishes of Francis."

A light was soon forthcoming, and all gazed at the beautiful woman who looked first at the superscription and then began to open the letter. All stood aloof and watched her closely.



"Get back to your kennel!"

Suddenly every vestige of color was seen to leave her face; her fingers closed about the document, and she glanced quickly at Marc.

"It is infamous," she cried, through compressed lips. "It makes my blood tingle. I seek no guest, not even one who wears an imperial crown."

Then she beckoned the young man to her side and held the letter up to him.

"See!" she cried, "the Emperor of Germany would be our guest. And now of all times!"

Marc of Coblenz was already reading the letter, his color coming and going like light and shade.

"The Emperor's wish is a command," said he, though the words nearly choked him.

"I know," answered Lady Eudora. "But you do not seem to read between the lines. There is more there than appears in black and white."

The Purple Princess crushed the letter in her hand and mounted once more to the port.

"I have read his majesty's message," said she, in the manner of one who weighs every word ere it is spoken. "Tell him that the gate of Castle Marx will not be closed against him, and add that if his reception is not what he expects, he must blame no one but himself."

The man at the moat was seen to start. Such words had never been sent to the most potent ruler in the world, and it is no wonder that he thought he had not heard aright.

"My horse is weary," he said, in pleading tones.

"There are rich pastures in the valley," answered the Purple Princess.

"I have ridden long and hard, as one must do when he rides for the Emperor Francis."

"Are there not good inns between here and Frankfort?"

"There are beds of straw and poor provender for a steed."

"Good night," was the curt rejoinder, and Lady Eudora, flushed to the temples, sprang to the ground.

"It is infamous," she exclaimed, when she reached Marc's side. "I know all. It was the Emperor who sent Count Soldan to waylay you. He would follow him and become my guest. I will not have it so."

"But Francis is strong-headed——"

"And I am strong-hearted," was the interjection. "Come with me, Marc. I read between the lines, and I know that I have been chosen to share with Francis the throne of Germany. But he must catch the bird before he cages it!' and she led him away, her eyes brilliant with her defiance, which was to unlock the doors of peril.

CHAPTER. IV.

A WEDDING RING.

ABOUT the hour when the Emperor's messenger turned away from Castle Marx, a man bestrode a magnificent horse whose sleek skin was as dark as rayless midnight, appeared on an elevated plateau, and resting the lines on his steed's arched and heated neck, looked westward.

He was large of frame, his skin sallow, his hair fell in luxurious masses over his broad shoulders, and he had the appearance of one born to command. His garments were rich and soft, and the sword he wore at his side had a hilt studded with jewels. This man was Black Karl, the chief of the robber barons on the Rhine, and the well-known name was one to conjure with.

Not far behind him half a dozen men sat their steeds like Centaurs, and ever and anon they put their heads together and seemed to be talking of their leader, who looked like a statue placed by human hands on the mountain top.

Suddenly Black Karl turned to those behind him, and said in sharp tones which took the attention of all:

"Sound the signal that the others may come."

Instantly the clear notes of a horn awoke the stillness of the scene, and forthwith a hundred horsemen galloped into view.

It was an inspiring scene in the moonlight, and Black Karl looked upon his band with a leader's pride.

"We will show ourselves to the Lady Eudora," continued the robber baron. "She shall know this night how Black Karl rides, and whether she likes it or not, she shall gaze upon us till she is a-weary."

For a few moments the band vanished, but presently they were seen on the level land below with the walls of Castle Marx rising above them. The horn sounded again, clearer than before, and Black Karl swept onward like a prince of the saddle. There came a cry from the castle walls, which soon swarmed with men, but not an answering cry came from their throats.

Along the edge of the moat dashed the forest pests, their plumes fluttering in the nocturnal breeze, and the steeds snorting in their wild delight.

Black Karl lifted his feathered hat when he came abreast of the fortress-castle, and rising in his steel-tipped stirrups, he sent a robber's salute to its lovely mistress. The call came back into his teeth, for no one answered it, and he bent his brows in anger and then burst into a laugh.

"The coming bridegroom is not welcome," he muttered. "The dove does not respond to the eagle's cry."

Had his vision been clearer, he would have singled out the young woman who stood at an angle in the wall and was looking down upon him with disdain in her eyes. The Purple Princess had been called to the wall by the voice of Dagobert, and with hands resting lightly on the stone rampart, she was watching the demonstration beneath her. Marc of Coblenz, attracted by the scene, had stolen to her side, and was viewing with her the exciting scene.

"It is Black Karl and his horde," exclaimed Eudora. "The wolves are abroad tonight; they have left their kennels, and are out for plunder."

Marc did not answer, so attentive was he to the startling exhibition, but he was roused by a soft touch on his sleeve.

Back of the night riders rose the stately hills, the dark firs upon them bending in the embraces of the wind, and overhead a full moon in all her splendor.

"Black Karl salutes his lady love," came up to those on the castle walls. "Let the Princess Eudora come forward and return the salute."

Lady Eudora winced at this, and her face lost color.

"The miscreant!" Marc heard her say. "Oh, for good men to meet this insulter."

Young Marc heard her clearly.

"How many retainers have you?" he asked.

"Three hundred."

"Well armed?"

"Their weapons are the best in Germany."

"Who leads them?"

"Who but Dagobert?"

"Give them unto me," cried Marc. "Let me show this rascal that there are no cowards in Castle Marx."

"Take them," answered Eudora, with a winning smile. "Call out the men, Dagobert," and forthwith the captain of the troop vanished to obey his mistress' command.

Excitement reigned within the fortress walls. In a short time three hundred men appeared in the spacious court, all mounted on supple steeds, whose trappings denoted the wealth of the Purple Princess.

Marc placed himself at their head and doffed his hat to Lady Eudora, who threw him an answering kiss. The broad gates flew open, and the cavalcade, with a shout, dashed out. Eudora waved her laced kerchief from the walls, and watched them with keen delight.

"What is this?" cried Black Karl, seizing the reins. "Does the Princess answer my salute in state?"

By this time the men of Castle Marx were over the clattering drawbridge, their swords unsheathed, and defiance in their dark eyes.

"For Lady Eudora and Castle Marx!" rang out in unison on the crisp air. "Down with the robbers of the Rhine!"

Black Karl grated his teeth and looked at his men.

"Marry," cried he, "'tis an unequal battle. My future bride flings me swords instead of kisses. Turn, my gallants! We care not to lose our blood this night."

Away went the troop of miscreants, with Marc thundering at their heels. It all lay in the swiftness of the horses the two bands bestrode.

There were cries, oaths, and snatches of German song. Young Marc spurred far in advance of his troop, his figure bending over his horse's neck in his wild eagerness to lop an arm or cleave a head.

Into the dark passes of the hills went the enemies. Faint cries of battle were wafted back to the beautiful woman on the wall, and when she no longer heard them she clasped her fair hands and breathed a prayer.

An hour passed. The Purple Princess had not for a moment left her post. She was almost alone in the fortress.

At last forms were seen in the valley below. Marc rode at the head of her retainers, and at sight of her waved his hand. She sent him a like reply and waited on.

"He escaped you?" were her first words, as the young champion made his appearance in the court. "Black Karl had the swifter steed?"

"He knows the passes as the sailor knows the sea," was the reply. "We got in a few blows, but Black Karl is as slippery as an eel."

At this Eudora smiled and held out her hand.

"We have no trophy but this," continued Marc, taking from beneath his doublet a small packet, which he extended. "It may be nothing, my dear, and——"

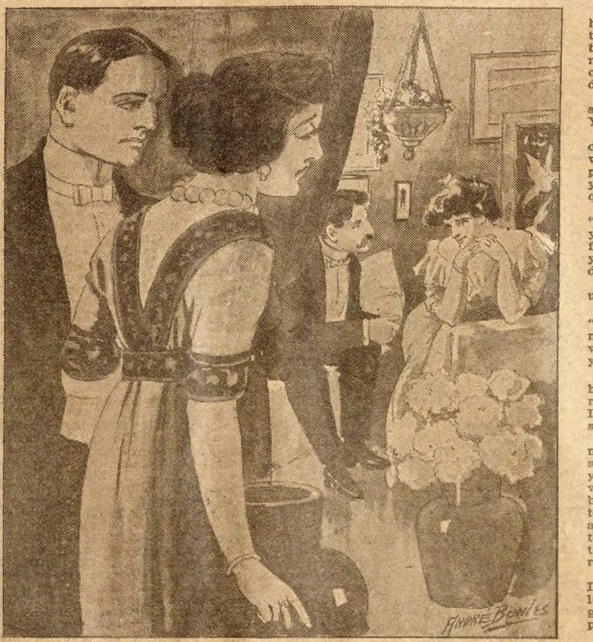
Already the Princess was opening the

(Continued on page fifteen.)

SOLD AT AUCTION

Or, ONE WOMAN'S FATE

By ANNIE BROWNLEE QUIMBY



Sir Richard was never very constant.

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Begun in No. 34, August 22. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER VII.

THE season was at its height. Society was working hard and called it pleasure.

Lady Melville was much admired and sought after, but to her life had grown empty and wearisome. For her society was one monotonous round of duty. She wondered in a vague sort of way how so many can live for it alone.

Since the commencement of the season she had seen very little of her husband. He had his own round of pleasures and occupations. The gulf between the two was becoming wider each day. There had been no open rupture or secret disagreement between them. They had simply grown apart.

Lady Althea was holding a reception. Literary people, dramatic people, artistic people, musical people crowded her elegant rooms. Lady Althea's receptions were noted for the strange people one met there. To quote Mrs. Newberry, the sort of people one met there "was really too awful. To meet them anywhere else but at Lady Althea's it would be quite impossible to know them." Every one would tell you Lady Althea was odd and eccentric, but Dorothy and she were warm friends.

Tonight Lady Melville came alone. Sir Richard had declined to accompany her. He had taken a violent dislike to Lady Althea. The hour was late and the rooms were crowded when she arrived. The beautiful hostess greeted her affectionately.

While Lady Melville was speaking to the hostess, Max Eager joined them. Dorothy was surprised to meet him here, and a flush of pleasure rose to her face. He saw it, and his heart throbbed with a wild joy. Lady Althea saw it, also, and wondered. She had heard some little echoes of society gossip, and was beginning to notice that Max was very devoted to the beautiful Lady Melville.

"My dear Dorothy, I believe I can promise you a treat. Signor Marona has promised to give us a violin selection. I know how fond you are of the violin. Mr. Eager, you will find Lady Melville a comfortable seat," and with a dawning wonder in her eyes she left them.

Max Eager's heart was throbbing painfully as he walked by Dorothy's side. He was thinking that even in her girlhood days she had never looked so exquisitely lovely as tonight, and she was pleased to see him. Her eyes said so, although her lips would not.

"Sir Richard not coming?" he asked, carelessly.

"No," she answered. "He doesn't care for Lady Althea's receptions. One meets such queer people here, you know."

"Yes, that's so. But that is one reason why I like to come here. So many of the receptions one goes to nowadays are merely a repetition of each other."

"How critical you have become. Are you tiring of the gayeties of the season already?"

"Yes, I am sick of it all. I sometimes wish I were dead." His face had grown almost fierce with the passion within.

"Hush!" she said in a startled voice. "You must not talk like that. You are young, and rich, and there is the world and a long life before you."

"Yes, I am young, and what the world calls rich," he said bitterly. "But I would to God that I had reached the end of my threescore and ten!"

Unconsciously she laid her little white hand on his arm in token of sympathy.

"My God, Dorothy, don't do that! And don't look at me with such pitiful eyes, or I shall do something desperate—something I should regret all my life!"

He had not taken her to a seat, as Lady Althea requested him, but into the cool, fragrant conservatory, among the lovely palms and flowers.

Her hands had dropped trembling to her side. She stood before him silent and downcast. A sweet, horrible joy had crept into her heart. She dared not look up lest he read it in her eyes. He had not forgotten, then. He loved her in spite of all. Oh! the joy, the shame of it! Yet the knowledge was infinite bliss.

But despite the downcast eyes, he had read her secret. His heart gave a great joyous throb, then grew cold and chill. She was not for him! She belonged to another!

Then the downcast eyes were lifted timidly to his face. Tears glittered on the long lashes, and there was such mingled despair and love in their depths that he was moved in spite of himself. With a wild, unconquerable impulse he snatched her to his breast and kissed the tremulous lips—not once but a dozen times.

For one moment—one madly joyous moment—Dorothy forgot husband and child, and allowed her head to lie unresistingly upon his breast, and listened to words of passionate love. Then came memory, accusing and relentless.

"Oh, Max, how could you!" she sobbed, springing from his embrace, terrified and repentant.

His arms dropped empty to his side, as he stood gazing helplessly at her. A thousand wild thoughts were surging through his fevered brain, but he did not utter them. He was fighting for self-command. What dreadful thing had he done!

"Forgive me!" he said humbly. "I—I shouldn't have done that, but I—I forgot. You used not to mind my kissing you."

"Ah! But that was before——" She could not finish the sentence, but stood white and dejected before him, her reproachful eyes upon his face. "I thought you had forgotten," she added, in a quavering voice.

"Forgotten!" he cried, almost angrily. "A man doesn't forget so easily, and you are not the sort of woman to be soon forgotten. God knows I tried to forget you! Tried harder than I ever tried to do anything before, but failed."

"Why do you tell me this? Of what use is it?" she faltered.

"I don't know," he answered wearily, "unless I thought perhaps you might pity me—might be a little sorry, perhaps, for what you had done. Perhaps it will help you to forgive my rash act just now."

"Don't speak like that, or you will break my heart," she entreated, lifting reproachful eyes to his. "Do you think I have no heart—no feelings? Do I not suffer as keenly as you?"

"You?" he cried. Do you suffer? Oh! my poor darling, why did you give yourself away from me? I would have made you so happy," he said huskily. "If you were only happy! If you belonged to a better man than I, I would try to be content. But oh, my darling, the desolation and misery of our wasted lives! Sometimes I have it in my heart to do something desperate." He was becoming reckless.

"Hush! You must not speak like that! I must not listen!" she whispered, gently laying one hand upon his arm. He grasped the slender fingers in his hot palm and kissed them passionately.

"Dorothy! Dorothy! How could you destroy our happiness and make life such a hideous nightmare?" His arm stole around her waist in a clinging embrace. "Say you love me and are sorry, Dorothy!" he pleaded, still holding her close to his breast.

"I can't—I musn't! It would be sinful!" she cried.

"Just say you love me, dear? Your eyes have told me you do, but I would hear it from your lips. Just whisper, 'I love you, Max.' It will help me to bear the pain."

His strong arms were around the trembling form, he strained her to his heart, and with eyes aglow with tenderness and love, scanned the troubled countenance. She looked up into the handsome, impetuous face of her boy lover and for a moment the cruel fate that separated them was forgotten. They were boy and girl again. He was picking daisies for her, and declaring his eternal love and adoration.

"Yes, I love you, Max, and I think I always shall," she answered, with a sort of desperation. "Heaven forgive me for saying it!" Then she angrily pushed his arm aside. "You almost make me hate you! You have made me guilty of that for which I have condemned others of my sex. I have lost my self-respect. Are my shame and degradation complete, or is there any other disgraceful confession you would force from me?"

His arms dropped to his side, and he stepped back, pale but calm.

"Don't speak so bitterly, Dorothy. It was wrong, I know, but I was so dreadfully unhappy I—I thought perhaps it would ease the pain to hear you say it." There was nothing of happiness or elation in his voice, which just now is peculiarly soft and tender. "It was a cruel, unmanly act to force you to such a confession, I know, but according to your mother I was always a bad sort," he said.

"I suppose you feel better now that you have heard me say that for which I should rather have died than utter?"

"No, I do not. It's poor satisfaction to know you are in the same boat as myself. It makes my pain no less to know you suffer, too. I believe I should be happier if I knew you loved your—— Sir Richard. I will never be able to think of my own sorrow now, without remembering that you suffer, too. I know what you must think of me, but believe me, I would give much to be able to live this last half-hour over again. Forgive me, Dorie, for I can't forgive myself!"

The old pet name of their childhood days came so naturally that he was unconscious of having uttered it. It brought the tears to Dorothy's eyes. How things had changed! How unutterably sad and dreary life was now!

He saw the glistening drops on her eyelashes, and believed that his rashness had caused them. When he spoke again it was in self-accusation and bitter self-reproach.

"Dorothy! Dorothy! Do forgive me! I was a brute, a scoundrel, anything you like! Only don't let my rashness disturb you so."

"I have little to forgive," she said, tremulously. "I was equally to blame. I should not have come here with you." She was very pale, but perfectly calm now, and the light of a new resolve shone in her eyes now.

"No, the fault is all mine. I see it all now. I brought you here and then behaved like a cad!" he said bitterly.

"Reproaches are of no avail now," she answered thoughtfully. "We must atone for this mistake in the future."

"Don't!" he exclaimed, almost sternly. "I know what you would say. My rashness has placed a barrier between us. How terribly cruel a good woman can be!"

"You forget," she said softly. "I must first be cruel to be kind. It would be madness to go on meeting day after day, after what has just occurred. There must be no further friendship between us."

"But I must see you sometimes. Were the world between us I would cross it to get one look at your face. I will not have it so! I will see you sometimes, though the whole world were to rise up and denounce me!" he cried vehemently. "Your precious mother will have much to answer for when she crosses the bar. She disposed of you like the auctioneer does a bale of goods. You were knocked down to the highest bidder and she has never ceased congratulating herself upon the excellent future she has secured for you. Had she secured you a husband worthy of you, it might not seem so bad. But all the world knows what Sir Richard is."

A deep crimson flooded the beautiful pale face on which he gazed. She stretched forth her small hands imploringly.

"I pray you, stop! It can do no good. With all his faults and virtues he is my husband still."

"Faults he has in plenty, but virtues—well, I never heard Sir Richard had any," Max replied, with a queer little laugh.

"There is no one quite perfect, I believe. And you of all men should not condemn him."

There was something in the sweet, sad voice and gentle eyes that made him turn away, ashamed and sorry for what he had said. Wild, terrible thoughts were surging through his hot brain, but he dared not utter them. Dorothy was not a woman to be trifled with. He dared not breathe a word that would mar the spotlessness of her pure soul. He knew she was the soul of honor and fidelity, that her life was pure and untarnished, and from that high pedestal he could not, if he would, drag her down. To another woman he might have whispered the baser temptings that filled his heart, but to Dorothy he dared not. The purity of her nature wrapped her about like a mantle; the breath of evil or dishonor could not touch her.

For several minutes they stood in silence, each heart filled with sad thoughts. Then Dorothy spoke:

"You must leave me now, Max. We have been absent so long people may wonder."

"But you won't be too cruel, Dorothy? You will let me see you sometimes. I have been silent before, I can be so again."

"Oh, Max! You make duty very hard. Don't wring my soul like this. I know it seems hard, but in that way lies safety," she entreated.

"Can't you trust me? Can't you believe in me again? Tonight will be forgotten—never referred to. We can surely be friends. There can be no harm in meeting as such."

"You should know that such a course may lead to scandal and much misery for ourselves. Safety lies in shunning each other—in placing distance between us."

"All I ask is to see you sometimes. That is not so very much, and I promise not to forget myself again."

After all, Dorothy was only a weak, frail woman and she loved him so. Her lips grew white with pain at the thought of a last farewell. Yet the small voice of conscience kept whispering, "Send him away!" She hesitated for a second, his entreaties ringing loudly in her ears, and as is usually the case, that instant's hesitation made all her better resolves unavailing. The door was suddenly opened and voices reached them.

Max bent eagerly forward. "Say yes, Dorie, or you will drive me to the devil." His hand found hers where it hung cold and limp by her side. She felt the strong, loving pressure, and her good resolutions melted like snow before a midsummer sun. She was conscious of an intense longing for him to remain by her side, yet reason kept ever whispering, "Send him away!" Her face paled to the hue of death. She realized she had lost the power to send him from her. That one instant's hesitation had sealed their future. The blood coursed through her veins like fire. She was filled with a strange, sweet ecstasy, mingled with dread and despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE glory of an early summer dawn, Max Eager paced his luxurious rooms, calling himself a coward, and even worse. He looked with haggard, tired eyes at the beautiful sunrise, and a sigh parted his lips.

"There are so many women in the world," he mused, as he stood gazing through the window. "So many that are young and beautiful, and could be had for the asking, yet all my life is spent in an unconquerable longing for one who belongs to another. How cruel and merciless fate is!"

In his heart Max Eager was ashamed of the part he had played. He had no right to wring that confession from Dorothy.

It is always difficult to judge correctly another's motives, or actions. No one can understand the inner workings, which sway us in certain directions, or impel us to certain impulses.

It is a great mistake to fancy people are either very good or very bad in this world. Life is made up of a mixture of both. There is no one so bad that he has not some virtue, or no one so good that he has not some evil tendencies in his nature. Circumstances and environment have much to do with our character.

That half-hour spent in Lady Althea's conservatory was the turning point in Max Eager's life. Now that the blood flowed more evenly in his veins, and his passionate heart beat more steadily, he knew that Dorothy had been right, and that safety lay in separation. But even while acknowledging the fact, he was glad that he was to see her again.

That she loved him, he knew, but the knowledge did not ease his pain. She was not a woman soon to forget her solemn marriage vows, or to think lightly of her maternal duties. She could never descend to the level of those who are lovers in secret, and who yet unscrupulously and serenely play their parts at home and in society. There would be no playing with her, yet she would suffer keenly. What would be the end? The link that bound them together was stronger than steel, than life itself; and the barrier was so frail.

Lady Melville, too, had her bitter thoughts. Her face burned with shame as she remembered that passionate embrace and the hot kisses on her lips. She thought with terror of having weakly yielded to his entreaties. In the eyes of many the privileges she had accorded him would be quite natural—quite within the pale of respectability. But in her heart she knew she had done wrong. She was conscious of having played with temptation, of having laid up misery for herself in the future. At times her heart was filled with bitter resentment toward the man who had placed her in her present position and a withering contempt for herself and her weakness.

About a month after Lady Althea's reception, Mrs. Newberry made her way into Lady Melville's drawingroom. Dorothy was holding a reception, and many fashionable people were scattered about the magnificent rooms.

Mrs. Newberry watched her daughter for some time. She noted the pale little face and the eyes in which there was a look of resignation and quiet despair.

"I do hope the child won't get herself talked about," she mused. "It would be so dreadfully unpleasant. Why doesn't she send him away. What's the use of having him dangling after her forever? It is quite too ridiculous to think of! I sincerely hope Sir Richard may not notice, but then, there is Lady Betty—a case of the pot and the kettle, I suppose. Only I do hope there will be no scandal. Dorothy was always romantic and absurd, but I did think that worthless Max would have more sense than to follow her like her shadow. I wonder what she sees in him? I always thought him quite commonplace and stupid."

She noticed Dorothy standing alone for a moment, and beckoned her to her side. With slow, graceful steps the younger woman advanced and took the seat indicated. She knew from the expression of her mother's face that she had something unpleasant to say.

"Dorothy, my dear, don't you think it rather unwise to be seen with Max so frequently? Of course, every one knows you are very old friends; yet, that will not prevent gossip. Scandal is a terrible thing, my dear."

"Very terrible, mother," Dorothy answered, calmly looking at her mother. "Who has been kind enough to air my affairs in public?"

"My dear, people will talk, you know! And then, Max's attentions are quite too conspicuous to escape notice. The absurd boy is scarcely civil to others, but he follows you like your shadow. My dear child, it is safer to have a dozen admirers than to have only one. I say this for your own sake, and for that of your child."

"You are very considerate, mamma, but I will not discuss my affairs with you or any one else." A hot flush had risen to the pale cheeks, and her heart beat stormily.

"Oh, of course!" Mrs. Newberry began uncomfortably. "Young people won't be advised by their elders."

"Mother," Dorothy began in a fearfully calm voice, "you of all people should be the last to reproach me for not having taken your advice. To my shame and sorrow, I acknowledge I was weak enough to take your advice, and what has it brought me? Sorrow, misery, and in the future, perhaps, shame! Mother! Mother! Your worldliness has broken my heart, and left my life empty and desolate! Never again reproach me for not having taken your advice!"

Her voice was even more bitter than her words, as she stood, erect and dignified, gazing reproachfully at her worldly mother.

"Dorothy, what ever has changed you so?" Mrs. Newberry asked in astonishment.

"You should know that, mother. Have you forgotten my wedding morning, just three years ago?" Mrs. Newberry looked distressed and uneasy, and for some seconds neither spoke. Then Dorothy continued: "I will not pretend to misunderstand you. You fear lest Max or I should forget ourselves—should do something rash. That proves how little you know either of us. We are not desirous of dragging our names through the mire of scandal. I shall not forget that I am a wife and a mother."

"I am relieved to hear you say that," her mother began. "Of course, I expected you would be very angry, but it was my duty to speak to you, and I never shirk a duty, no matter how unpleasant," she added, with a nod of self-approval. "Admire all men, my dear, but don't think too much of the attractions of any particular one."

"Your warning was quite unnecessary, mamma, and I must ask you in the future not to imagine you have any right to repeat it."

With this, Dorothy turned and went slowly toward the other end of the room, where Lady Betty was entertaining a number of friends with her flashing wit and brilliant repartee.

Mrs. Newberry looked after her daughter anxiously. "I almost wish I had left them alone. Max wouldn't have been such a bad match, after all, and she certainly doesn't seem very happy, while Sir Richard is not so attentive as he might be. But my word! the girl is so changed and odd! Why can't she make the best of it? Things can't be altered now. She is young, beautiful, and rich. What more can any woman reasonably want? She is a perfect fool to give Max Eager a single thought!"

Her musings were here disturbed by a woman, who wore a beautiful corn-colored gown, dropping gracefully into the seat just vacated by Lady Melville.

"My dear Lady Althea, how pleased I am to see you! I had no idea you were present."

Mrs. Newberry was more pleased than she cared to show. It was rarely, indeed, that such gatherings were graced by the presence of the lovely, if, perhaps, eccentric, Lady Althea.

"I go out so little, you know, dear Mrs. Newberry. Society has no charm for me. My tastes and inclinations are very different," the newcomer said, in her soft, musical voice. "Society is so empty and frivolous. Life is too short to be spent in vanity, and a mad, endless rush after pleasures that are so unsatisfying, and often so disastrous to our souls' salvation. What real pleasure can there be in scandalizing our neighbors? Or what does it really matter what Mrs. So-and-so's gown cost, or who made it, or whose wife ran off with the coachman, or whose husband pays attention to somebody else's wife? There is nothing instructive or elevating in such conversation. Just the reverse. Yet, such is a fair sample of the topics of conversation in society."

"I am afraid you are very critical, Lady Althea. One must speak of the things one hears and sees," Mrs. Newberry replied, feeling uncertain what she ought to say.

"Exactly, my dear Mrs. Newberry; but one doesn't see and hear the right things," the musical voice replied, its owner's eyes on some object across the room.

"I have never given much consideration to such social problems," Mrs. Newberry confessed. "I have not the honor to be considered clever like yourself. But I am quite satisfied with existing conditions. What is there to be gained by turning the world upside down?"

"The old, old cry, dear Mrs. Newberry. Humanity is ever opposed to its own good. Had I the leisure, I should be delighted to go into the matter and convert you to my views." She waved her exquisite fan gracefully.

"What an odd woman!" Mrs. Newberry thought, and breathed a prayer of thankfulness that she had not the leisure. "It may be a blessing that society sees so little of her."

"How well Lady Betty is looking tonight. What a striking-looking couple she and Sir Richard make."

Mrs. Newberry was interested at once, but noticeably uneasy. She glanced carelessly to where Lady Betty and Sir Richard were sitting by a window. Sir Richard was bending toward his companion in earnest conversation. There was unmistakable admiration in his eyes.

"Yes, Lady Betty is looking well, but then she always does that," Mrs. Newberry answered, with assumed indifference. "Sir Richard and she are old friends."

"So I have heard," Lady Althea replied, turning from the brilliant, animated face of Lady Betty to look at Dorothy. "I don't see how it is possible for the same man to admire two women so dissimilar as Lady Betty and Dorothy."

"I don't know, I am sure," replied Mrs. Newberry, "but her ladyship is very beautiful, very attractive. I think it quite possible for the one man to admire two different types of beautiful women."

"Yes, women are like flowers. We can all admire the rose and the lily, but if we are not careful, we are apt to get pricked with the thorns among the soft, velvety leaves of the rose, while the lily is without thorns."

"What an absurd creature!" Mrs. Newberry commented to herself.

Just then a fashionable matron spoke to her, and Lady Althea moved away.

The tall, handsome figure and broad shoulders of Max Eager could be easily discerned at the other end of the room. Lady Althea singled him out, and began earnestly studying the face that looked none too happy just then.

He was thinking of Dorothy, and wondering whether she would let him depart without a word or a smile. They had seen very little of each other since that fateful night in Lady Althea's conservatory, and tonight her greeting was formal, to the point of coldness. Lady Althea noticed that his eyes constantly sought Dorothy. Once she had looked toward him and smiled faintly. Instantly his face brightened, and there was a look of joyous expectation in his eyes.

"Poor boy!" thought Lady Althea. "He worships Lady Melville, and can't conceal his adoration. I was right, then. But does she return it, I wonder? I hardly think so. She is so transparent she would be sure to reveal the fact. She has youth, beauty and position, and is greatly admired, yet she is very unhappy; and that husband of hers doesn't seem to see it, or seeing, doesn't care. Heavens! What sad, dreary lives some women live!"

CHAPTER IX.

As MAX EAGER stood moodily worshiping Dorothy from afar, a soft hand was laid upon his arm, and the pleasant, wholesome voice of "Uncle Archie's wife" sounded in his ear.

"My dear Max, moping again! Why are you not making love to some of the beauties present?" Then, lowering her voice a degree or two, "I know several who would be pleased to receive attention from Mr. Max Eager—millionaire."

"Ah, Mrs. Douglas! I'm deuced glad you rescued me. I was just thinking of cutting the whole thing. These society affairs are a dreadful bore," he said, dispiritedly.

"What! Tired of the world already? A young man—and a rich young man, at that—denouncing society before he has reached the age of seven and twenty. Horrible! There must be something seriously the matter there," and she tapped his forehead good-naturedly.

Max laughed easily; he never felt annoyed at the American's brusque remarks. He knew that beneath the wormwood there was always the honey that had proved balm to his aching heart more than once.

"I suppose it must be my own fault if I find it dull. I don't see any one else who looks bored," re replied, glancing about the spacious rooms.

"Certainly not! We should never go out with the determination to be bored, or to become an absurd wallflower. You stupid boy! Are there not plenty lovely girls here who would be delighted to amuse you?"

"You seem determined to set some of those match-making mammas after me, Mrs. Douglas," he answered, with an amused smile. "Were I to converse for one-half hour with any particular young lady, I'd be sure to have 'mamma' after me. You see, she would suspect 'intentions,' and there might be some pretty hard running, and I don't feel equal to that at present."

"I suspect you're right, my boy," remarked "Uncle Archie's wife," with a knowing laugh. "The mothers do make some dead running. Perhaps, after all, it is best to steer clear of those female sharks."

"Thank you, Mrs. Douglas. I thought you would see it that way, and not send me into the camp of the Philistines." There was a merry twinkle in the speaker's dark eyes.

"But seriously, Max, you should not mope so dreadfully. You should take some interest in what is going on around you. It is positively sinful to drag out the days the way you do." There was a wistful, almost parental, note in her voice which touched him. No one had spoken to him like that since his mother had died, ten years before.

"It's no use. I can't, Mrs. Douglas. I seem to have lost interest in things. I've no ambition," he said wearily.

"Strange!" she said slowly, keenly scanning his face. "You used to have plenty of ambition. I remember I used to predict a great future for you."

"That was a long time ago, Mrs. Douglas. I regret I have not fulfilled expectations."

"Only three years. But you have changed since then, I admit. How beautiful Mady Melville looks tonight!" Abruptly she changed the subject.

"Very," he replied, "but Dorothy always looks lovely."

"Yes, she is one of the rare women who, under all circumstances, look dignified and lovely. Every one admires her grace, beauty, and aristocratic bearing but the one who has promised to cherish and protect her." Involuntarily she glanced from Dorothy to where Sir Richard was bending in a loverlike attitude over Lady Betty.

"Sir Richard was never very constant, you know," Max observed. "And then, he has been married three years, time enough to weary of his toy."

"True," the other replied. "What ill-assorted matches one does see. Marriages are made in Heaven, they say," she mused.

"If you will allow me to express a candid opinion, I would say it was in the other place," Max answered. "Heaven has nothing to do with the majority of marriages."

"Yes," "Uncle Archie's wife" replied, in a sad, far-away voice. "It is a most unpleasant fact that marriages are conducted on too much of a business scale. Too often girls are allowed no voice in the matter. They are put up for sale, and knocked down to the highest bidder. It's bad for the girls, bad for society, but worst of all for the generation that follows. As a rule, girls that are disposed of in that manner don't make good mothers or wives."

"What about the men?" Max asked, a peculiar set expression on his face.

"It is bad for the men, too. Sometimes they are deceived, duped into believing the girls really care for them. Then they are to be pitied most of all. But when a man marries a girl, knowing that she cares nothing for him, that it is really a marriage of convenience, then he deserves the misery that is sure to follow."

"According to your views, then, none of them get much happiness out of life."

"That is a fact. It is bad for them all. They dress up and entertain, smile and look happy, but it is all a sham. Few society people are really what they seem. Rich apparel and a smiling face cover many an aching heart, but the world is not supposed to know that."

It seemed to her while speaking that her companion's face had grown paler, the shadows under the eyes darker.

He was thinking of his own ruined life, and Dorothy's. He knew that Lady Melville was one of the many thousand unfortunate girls that are annually sacrificed to wealth and position. Sold into genteel slavery—if fact, becoming real white slaves—that was worse than death. Her burden was heavier than his, for he had no hateful bondage to chafe his soul. If he was miserable, he was at least free.

Dorothy, now and then, had stolen a glance at the face of her girlhood lover. With a great weight on her heart, and a pain that would not be lulled to rest, she noted the change in the dark, handsome face. The shadows had deepened under the dark, drooping lashes during the last few weeks. The face had a look of utter weariness that she had never seen there before. Sorrow and sympathy welled up in her heart, and looked out through her eyes, but she dared not utter them. Her lips were sealed with the silence of wifehood. She dared not notice his suffering or try to console him.

"If he would only be wise and go away! It is sheer madness to continue like this." But she knew in her inmost soul that the very thought of his going was bitter anguish.

Mrs. Douglas took Max Eager's arm, and they slowly made their way to Dorothy's side.

"What a brilliant reception, my dear Dorothy," "Uncle Archie's wife" began. "You have all the notable and most exclusive people of London present. I see Lady Althea here; that is a real triumph,

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my dear. I hear she is very exclusive, and goes scarcely anywhere."

"Yes," Dorothy replied, a smile dawning in her eyes. "Lady Althea goes out very little. She thinks society too shallow and empty, hardly worth wasting one's life over."

"I see! I have heard something of that before. A sort of a social recluse. How does she manage to put in the time? Has some sort of a hobby, I suppose?"

"Oh, Lady Althea doesn't find the time hangs heavy. She is one of the busiest women in England. She has her hobby, as you call it. She is devoted to charitable work; not in a fashionable way, however. She doesn't give huge sums to charitable institutions, for the purpose of getting flattering paragraphs in the daily journals. She seeks out her own charitable objects and discreetly helps them to help themselves. In the slums, there are thousands of little children who owe their very existence to Lady Althea's generosity. No widow, or orpan, or any other worthy person, ever appealed to her in vain.

"I once heard a funny story of two little waifs, who had been rescued by her ladyship and placed in the care of an old woman, who was also a protege of Lady Althea. It seemed the old woman taught the children to say their prayers every night before retiring. One night, while overhearing them, she was surprised to hear them ask Lady Althea for their 'daily bread,' instead of the Lord. At first she was shocked, then laughingly said to a friend who was present: 'It's nae so very different, after all. Lady Althea, if not exactly the guid Lord, is the next best thing.'"

"What a paragon she must be!" "Uncle Archie's wife" said laughingly. "But what an exquisitely dainty little creature she is, too, so graceful and distinguished-looking. I would love to know her."

"I will introduce you the first opportunity. I know you will like her very much. There is no sham or veneer about dear Lady Althea."

CHAPTER X.

"I HEAR you are leaving town soon," Max remarked, speaking for the first time. He had been an interested listener to the conversation between the two women.

"Yes, London is getting unbearable. I will go to Devonshire next week. I am anxious for the quiet and restfulness of the dear old Grange. Sir Richard thinks of going abroad—to Switzerland, I think."

"You should accompany him. Switzerland is full of magnificent scenery and delightful surprises. You would enjoy it very much."

"Oh, no. I dislike traveling. I shall enjoy the peaceful beauty of the Devonshire hills more than I should the mountains of Switzerland. I hate sightseeing, where everything is hustle, bustle, and there is always a crowd."

It was on the tip of Max Eager's tongue to say, "You used to enjoy traveling," but he remembered in time to check the utterance. Instead he said: "Does Sir Richard go with friends?"

"Yes, I believe there is quite a party going. Lady Rutledge is going, I know, and her friends, the Solomans, and Roland Yorke, and Charlie Foster, the Yateses and their two daughters. There will be quite a company, I believe."

"I wonder at Lady Betty going. I heard her say recently that she had tired of Switzerland—had been there at least a half-dozen times."

"One must go somewhere, I suppose. As well there as any other place. Lady Betty has traveled a great deal, I suppose. Perhaps there are few places that are really new to her."

"Perhaps," he replied, in a queer voice, and wondered if Dorothy was really as ignorant as she seemed.

Mrs. Douglas had left them some few minutes before, on the plea of speaking to a friend, and they were alone.

Dorothy wondered at the note of surprise and queerness in Max's voice.

"You don't like Lady Betty? I can tell by your voice," she said, looking straight into the handsome, boyish face.

"Like her?" he repeated, arching his fine brows. "I have scarcely the honor of her acquaintance." He gave a light, peculiar laugh. "But to be quite candid, I don't like the woman. There is something about her that sets one's teeth on edge. I should not like a sister or a wife of mine to make a friend of her."

"I suppose not. Yet, she is very charming," Dorothy answered carelessly.

To her Lady Betty was simply a fascinating woman of the world, very handsome, very brilliant, and very much admired. A little too frivolous and vain, perhaps, but withal a charming woman.

Meanwhile, in a little alcove, Lady Betty and Sir Richard were having a little heart-to-heart talk.

"I tell you she doesn't care to come," Sir Richard was saying impatiently.

"Have you asked her?" she inquired softly.

"Certainly, and she prefers to remain at the Grange. Dislikes traveling."

"I'm awfully sorry. It would make things appear quite respectable were she to accompany us."

"Fiddlesticks! Respectable indeed! As though it were anything else. I'll manage that part of it, and then there will be a large party of us," he answered.

"But the probabilities are that I shall get talked about, and I would avoid that, at all hazards."

"Afraid of Mrs. Grundy, eh?" he smiled.

"Oh, no. She and I are very good friends. Then, it is quite the fashion to get talked about nowadays. Every one gets talked about—either for what they do, or for what they don't do, or for what they are expected to do. Your wife must be a very perfect woman. I hear no breath of scandal against her." She waved her fan gracefully in the direction of Dorothy and Max Eager. The latter was closely watching the little pale face of his companion, and his eyes shone with something more than friendship.

"A perfect paragon!" he answered. "Only paragons are very uninteresting. Too proper, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"You have great confidence in her," she said, a little coldly, covertly watching the pair in the distance.

"Yes, I have perfect confidence in Dorothy. She would never do aught to drag my name through the mire. Dorothy is perfectly safe, but insufferably stupid."

"Most good women are stupid, you know. That's why they remain so good. However, I don't believe Mr. Eager holds that opinion of your wife. Judging from the expression of his face just now, I would say he found her very entertaining," she said, with a half-mocking laugh.

"The young fool! I can't see what attraction he sees in her. She is as commonplace and ordinary as an Indian in front of a cigar store."

"What great attraction did you see in her to make you marry her? I suppose he is no worse than yourself."

"I often ask myself that question of late. Yet I was mad to win her. I would hear of no obstacle to the union. It was an absurd infatuation that I don't care to remember," he replied moodily.

"And, manlike, the infatuation has lasted less than three years! Admirable fidelity!" she cried sarcastically.

"How cruel you are to taunt me! Had you been true to me, I should never have committed such a folly."

"You forget, you were not Sir Richard Melville then. Having no money of my own, I was compelled to marry for money. Had you remained true to me——"

She ended the sentence with a sigh.

"Had I only known that Sir Roland Rutledge would be considerate enough to shuffle gracefully out of life, I would have acted very differently," he whispered regretfully.

"You knew he was old, gray-haired, and toothless. You might have foreseen the end. It was only the expectation of his early death that tempted me to marry him."

"And now we are no better off than we were before."

"No," she replied, a little acidly. "Your 'absurd infatuation' has parted us again. But keep to your pearl of purity, mon cher. She is safe, you know, perfectly safe." And she glanced significantly at Dorothy and Max Eager.

"You are cruel, Betty!" Sir Richard cried petulantly. "You know she bores me, and she doesn't care a farthing for me, and never did."

"Which is a very fortunate thing for her!" cried Lady Betty. "Now you have talked to me long enough. Go and amuse some one else. I see a number of inquisitive eyes directed toward us."

"But I don't want to talk to any one else. The other women are so stupid and dull, after talking to you, and I don't give a fig for their inquisitiveness."

"But I do, so go! I can't talk to you any longer. That pretty little pink-and-white doll of yours will be getting jealous soon."

"Dorothy jealous! Do you see that statue of Apollo yonder?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, you might as well expect to see that step down and take a saunter among the guests."

"Nevertheless, you must go. I won't talk to you any more. I am going to chat with 'Uncle Archie's wife.' She amuses me, and it is rarely any one does that now."

Sir Richard moved away reluctantly, and the evening passed off as such evenings usually do, with music, singing, flirtations, and delightful little tete-a-tetes. The people who had congenial companions were happy enough; the others were bored, but managed not to show it. The beautiful young hostess moved among her guests gracefully, and two dark eyes watched her sadly.

As Sir Richard mingled carelessly among the others, he was thinking of his conversation with Lady Betty. He understood, in a vague sort of way, that she wished to poison his mind against his wife, but he had a stubborn conviction that Max Eager's attentions were not encouraged—in fact, that they were distasteful to her. Dorothy was cold, quiet, and uninteresting. It was not in her nature to care for any one, unless it should be her child. Lady Betty had not succeeded in arousing one spark of jealousy in his heart, against his lovely girl-wife. He was weary of her, but he trusted her entirely, and to all the siren's venomous hints he turned a deaf ear.

Dorothy had grown dreadfully weary of fashionable life, it was racking her nerves and ruining her health. No shop girl or factory hand worked harder than these butterflies of fashion. Yet they called it pleasure. Every day and every hour was crowded with social duties.

As the season drew to a close, she thought, with a throb of delight, of the quiet restfulness of the dear old Grange. There, with the sweet companionship of her child, her books, and her music, she would have absolute quiet and rest. She thought, with a thrill of pleasure, of the cool forest shades, where the distant roar of the sea fell like music on her ear. There, amid the magnificent hills and the green, sloping meadows, social worries would be forgotten, and peace and quiet would reign.

The last guests had departed, the magnificent rooms were solemn and still. Sir Richard had gone to attend a late supper at a fashionable club, and the young wife was alone, with only her sad, remorseful thoughts for company. She dropped wearily into a huge chair, and with a sigh of relief pillowed her head among the soft, luxurious cushions.

The world would have called Lady Melville a very fortunate woman—she had youth, beauty, and unlimited means, yet, her heart was one constant ache—ache—ache, which her worldly advantages failed to relieve.

"Oh, mother," she murmured, in bitterest anguish, "it were better had you killed me, than to weigh me down with such a load of misery! Whichever way I look is sin and disgrace. If I could only tear this merciless ache from my heart and forget! But I cannot! I cannot! God pity and forgive me! What am I to do?"

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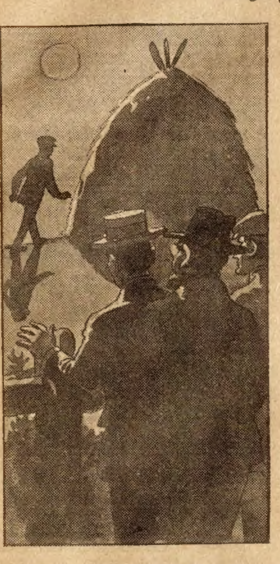

Near the haystack a man was walking.

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Begun in No. 30, July 25. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JENSEN, the miller, seemed to have forgotten all about the mysterious man whom they had discovered in the next room and whom they had pursued in vain. His eyes were glued upon Howard Whittleby's face with an expression of curiosity and aversion.

Richard Zellers, better known as Keeneyes, listened in the most casual manner, as if what was being said had for him no interest. Howard told his story with many hesitations.

He said: "As you know——"

"Don't begin with 'As you know,'" interposed the detective. "Take for granted that we know nothing, or you may take for granted that my friend Jensen knows more than he does."

Jensen nodded as if to say that Keeneyes had expressed his own thought.

"Very well," said Howard, meekly. "You should know, then, in the first place, that I love Alice Delemere, and have long loved her, better than my own life. And I am proud to say that Alice loved me, and has often assured me that her feeling for me was as faithful and strong and tender as mine could possibly be for her. Of course, she could not read my heart, but that was her belief. Anyway, I had confidence in her. I thought her true."

"You don't think so now?" inquired Keeneyes.

"I don't know what to think, now. In the meantime, her parents objected strongly to my attentions to their daughter. So did Edgar. The reason was simple—I am quite poor. They are—I mean were—naturally proud of Alice, and wanted her to make what is called a 'good match.'"

"And a match with you wouldn't be a good match, eh?"

"Not in the opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Delemere. At last they forbade me the house. What could I do?"

"Rather tell us what you did do."

"I had a long and private conference with Alice—a secret meeting. She did not want to agree to this meeting with me because she was always a very dutiful daughter—a terribly dutiful daughter—obeyed extravagantly. The parents had said they would never consent to our marriage; she said she would never agree to marry me without their consent. But she also said that not to marry me would break her heart. So she seemed resigned just to live on with a broken heart. She cried all the time we had our interview. She felt nothing was to be done—said she would not live very long."

"I understand. And did you propose a remedy?"

"I suggested that I might not always be poor. She thought it must be years and years before I could have enough to make myself an eligible suitor. In the meantime they would be pressing her into society—as they would imagine, for her own good—and this would kill her."

"How old is she?" interposed Keeneyes.

"Nineteen."

"Yes," said Keeneyes, thoughtfully, "girls do feel that way at nineteen. Well, what was the upshot of the interview?"

"At last I told her I had thought of a plan. I asked her to trust me and I would solve the difficulty. She said she knew she could trust me, and she did trust me. I told her not to ask me what I purposed doing, and she agreed readily enough. She said she knew anything I might do would be right and honorable. She couldn't marry without her parents' consent, but the moment I could obtain that she would marry me; and she wasn't afraid I would do anything wrong in trying to get it. Her only fear was that I couldn't succeed in getting it. That put me on my honor. She knew I wouldn't do anything wrong—well, that put me on my honor. So I decided to abduct her."

"Without her consent?"

"Of course—without her consent or knowledge."

"That certainly sounds honorable enough!" commented Jensen, ironically.

"I thought it permissible under the circumstances," said Howard, "though it sounds worse than it seemed at that time. Of course, Alice would never have agreed to be carried off. It had to be without her knowledge. Therefore I couldn't handle the proposition myself. Now, I have a brother living in Oklahoma City who has always stood by me in tight places, and I went to see him. He was in for it at once, and had a piece of land in the State Alice and I could go to farming on, as soon as her father consented to the marriage. We were to carry her away from her room at night, keep her imprisoned in some safe spot until her family agreed to our wedding, in case I recovered her—that was the scheme. My brother is a small man, and as you see, I am not a very strong fellow physically. We needed a man of bulk, of muscle and nerve, to do the heavy work. Putting the ladder to the window, carrying her off on a horse was easy; but carrying her down the ladder was too big a proposition for both of us together. My brother—Judge Whittleby—had a friend he could trust that seemed to be just the one we wanted; his name was Snaggs."

"Snaggs was the giant that carried her from the house, was he?"

"Yes, my brother said he could trust Snaggs; of course, I had to trust my brother as to that. He seemed all right. Maybe he is. I went up to the room first. Alice was asleep. I had a handkerchief saturated with chloroform. I stood beside the bed and carefully administered it until she was insensible—never did wake up to suspect what was going on—just passed from peaceful sleep to deep unconsciousness. I tied a white cloth over her face—not, of course, the one with the chloroform—that if any one should happen to be passing they couldn't recognize who she was. Of course, we didn't gag her. That idea was monstrous. Then I took her on my horse and rode away."

"But how could you expect to get her off your horse and to a place of safety when you couldn't carry her from her bedroom? For you must have wrapped her up, and in the bedclothes or whatever you wrapped her in, she'd be heavier than if simply dressed."

Howard shook his head. "You don't know what an undertaking it is to carry a girl as heavy as Alice out a window and down a long ladder. That was where we had to have Snaggs. The rest was easy enough."

"You took her to Glenover?" asked Jensen.

"No-o-o, of course not."

"But what and where is Glenover?" demanded Jensen.

"What!" ejaculated the detective. "Is it possible that you do not know what Glenover is?"

"Of course it's possible. Of course I don't know; and neither does anybody else."

"Nonsense!" returned Keeneyes. "Glenover is the little boxed-up office in the second story of your mill."

"My mill?" Jensen faltered, bewildered. "How?"

"What is the name of your mill?" snapped the detective.

"I call it the Glen, because it stands in the middle of a natural glen."

"Just so. And isn't the second story over the glen?"

"Of course it is, but——"

"Then isn't that office Glenover?"

"But nobody ever called it Glenover. That sounds ridiculous to me."

"How can a fact sound ridiculous? Howard and his gang of abductors decided to call that place Glenover—didn't you, Howard?"

"We did."

"So it would be simple and close at hand, and they could talk about it without anybody suspecting what place was meant, though their intelligences should be telling them?"

"Yes, that was the reason."

"Certainly. Well, go on with your narrative."

"But," the miller interposed, "did you bring Miss Alice to my mill?"

"No, that was not the plan. The plan was for me to take her to a safe place; later, all of us would meet at Glenover (your upstairs office) and discuss the next move—the way to bring the Delemeres to terms."

"Oh, I understand! Well, where did you take her?"

"I rode as hard as I could in order to reach Cedartown before daylight. At Cedartown we had a house already prepared; a deserted house which Snaggs had rented in his name—a big house with a basement, at the edge of town. I carried Alice to this house, imprisoned her in the basement room, which was furnished with every convenience, including dresses and so forth, for I am sorry to say that in order to carry out my plan I had, as you suggested, been obliged to hastily wrap her up in her bedclothes. We had boarded up the windows to several thicknesses, and within had set iron bars. We had left food in the room, also a warning on the wall to the effect that if she remained quiet she would not be injured. I left a note, that my handwriting might reassure her. In this note I said that by an amazing twist of circumstances I was unable to do anything for her, but in a day or two I would come in person from Glenover and rescue her, and in the meantime I assured her on my most sacred honor that she would be unharmed. I threw in the word 'Glenover' just to mystify her, so she wouldn't suspect that I was behind the abduction. I didn't want her to suspect the truth until I came to her with her father's consent to our wedding."

"Good heavens, what villainy!" ejaculated Jensen.

"I loved her, she loved me. I held my act justifiable," said Howard. "And I told myself that as soon as her father found how happy we were in each other, he would be glad I had done it."

Jensen snorted disbelief. "Well, did you get his consent?"

"How could I when the house was blown up the very next morning?"

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Howard smiled wearily. "Would I have blown up Alice's parents when I had ventured so much to win their consent to the wedding? I haven't the remotest idea who it was—unless it was Snaggs; and I can see no motive for his doing such an abominable thing, unless he got panic-stricken and feared he would be hunted down."

"But where is Snaggs?"

"I don't know—my brother doesn't know; he disappeared that very night as if the earth had swallowed him up."

"And has he never reappeared?"

"Never."

"You say that before the kidnaping he was a man your brother trusted implicitly?"

"Yes, but he's never heard of him since."

"There is something in that I don't at all understand," interposed Jensen. "According to the evidence, it was your brother that was the one called 'Judge'——"

"Yes, my brother is Judge Whittleby."

"Well, the eyewitness swore that it was this Judge that carried off the young lady on his horse. And now you say it was you who carried her away."

"I am not responsible for what the eyewitness imagined he saw," returned Howard, impatiently.

"No, that's very true; but one eyewitness, a negro named White, was in mortal terror of being strung up if he didn't tell us the exact truth and he could have had nothing to gain in deceiving us. Besides, the other witness, the barber, also swore to the same thing; and we know he was sincere, because he lost his mind, afterwards, from brooding over it. And so we know it was the short, wiry fellow that carried off Miss Alice—and that couldn't have been you. Yet now you declare that it was you."

"I'm who it was," Howard maintained.

"Jensen," interposed Keeneyes, impatiently, "you delay my friend in the telling of his story. Let him proceed."

"But I don't want him to proceed when I know he's not giving us the real facts in the case."

"Jensen," said the detective, reprovingly, "don't you understand that Howard is protesting how he carried off the young lady merely to shield his brother? He's brought his brother into the trouble, and he now wants to shoulder as much of the blame as possible. I understand you, Howard. Pray continue."

"Oh!" said Jensen, seeing the light.

Howard did not respond to this point. He said:

"To go back to the history—well, as I said, Snaggs had disappeared. My brother and I met at Glenover—the little office upstairs in your mill, Mr. Jensen—but Snaggs didn't come. The house had been blown up, and with the disappearance of the Delemeres and with the astounding failure on the part of Snaggs to show up, we didn't know what to do. But we decided at last that we would simply have to go to our house in Cedartown, release Alice, explain everything, leave it to her whether or not she could forgive me and marry me. So I went——"

"Did you go?" snapped Jensen, "or was it your brother?"

"So I went," repeated Howard, "and before I got to the doorstep I saw that the house had been entered. A window was raised. Well, I rushed to the basement room; no need of unlocking the door—it had been burst open. She was gone. And there wasn't the slightest clew to indicate how or why she had gone——"

"As for the 'why,' that seems simple enough," growled Jensen.

"Does it?" cried Howard, turning upon him at last. "Then if she went away simply because she didn't like it there, why has she never been heard of since? No, I believe she was carried away. And that is why I have always been as desperately anxious as living soul could be, to find a clew to the Delemere mystery. That is why I have hunted when others hunted, and hunted after they were tired—why I have scoured the country day and night. If I had told what I have now told you, it couldn't have helped in the slightest degree. And there you have all that I know."

"Now," said Keeneyes, promptly, "as you have told all you have to tell, permit me to continue the discussion of the case at the point where I was interrupted. I have reviewed the blowing up of the Delemere house, with the accompanying disappearance of the family. Let us now consider how, one by one, each (always except Alice Delemere) has reappeared; perhaps before we are done we will have reached some interesting conclusions.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER the Delemere house was blown up," said Jensen, the miller, beginning to recover his equitable temper, "the first of the family to be seen was Edgar."

"Yes," Howard agreed, "and before he was seen, clews to him were found. His watch-charm was imbedded in a branch of the tree that had grown near his sister's bedroom window, and his watch was found in the ruins of the back stairs. By that we knew that he had either escaped from the front window or from the rear—it might have been either one. It looked as if it were both, only, of course, that was impossible."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Keeneyes, looking from one to the other. "Are you two investigating this case, or am I?"

"Excuse me," said Howard, hastily.

"These clews you speak of do not concern us," said the detective, who was still somewhat ruffled by their taking the initiative. "He was seen by the negro Tooten looking from the deserted barn; and in the house to which the barn belonged, both Tooten and Howard came upon unmistakable evidences of him; his hat; and his handwriting. Now, why was Edgar looking from the barn? Why was he in the deserted house? How came he with that slip of paper on which he had written 'Glenover'? You two are so eager to converse, pray proceed and answer my questions."

"We do not know," Jensen said meekly.

"The next one seen was Mrs. Delemere," remarked Keeneyes, enjoying their confusion. "An old gentleman named Hiram Granger was driving in from a farm when, as he passed through a grove just back of town, he saw her making her escape among the trees. There was a search. No trace of her was found. What was she doing there, gentlemen? Why wasn't Edgar with her?"

Both shook their heads.

"The third to be seen was Mr. Delemere. First, an old woman who rented a cabin from him jointly with another owner, a farmer, saw him pass up the country road toward town. He avoided recognition. The farmer, being notified, pursued, and found you, Howard, staring as if you had just seen a falling star. And what was your story? That he had darted into a near-by pasture—and had not come out."

"Exactly," said Howard, at last finding his voice. "I saw him run around behind a haystack. But he never reappeared."

"You went to examine the haystack, didn't you?"

"Yes, and the farmer was with me. But there wasn't a trace of him."

"Yet you felt sure he had not run out of the pasture?"

"I know he didn't."

"And there wasn't any other hiding-place but the haystack?"

"There was not; not even a tree."

"But you think he wasn't in the haystack?"

"I am ready to make my oath to the fact; so is the farmer."

"Then, my dear sir, what do you think became of him?"

Howard shook his head.

"Very good. And the next time the Delemeres were seen, all of them were in the mill, in the office which you had agreed with your pals to call 'Glenover.' How do you suppose they knew that you had agreed upon the spot?"

"I don't know that they did know it, or even suspect it."

"But in that case, good heavens, sir! Why were they there?"

"I don't know why they were there."

"Do you deny that Edgar had written 'Glenover' on his piece of paper? If not, how do you suppose he knew there was any such place, since the place was one of your own creation, so far as its name went?"

"I have thought about that a great deal," said Howard, "and I have reached a conclusion regarding it. You will remember that when Alice was abducted, I left a note with her explaining that no harm was intended, and in this note I rather foolishly used the word 'Glenover.' Now, whatever happened to her, it is possible that this note of mine was left behind; and if Edgar ever followed the trail to that basement, he would see the note, and from the note he would learn not only that I was at the bottom of the abduction, but he would glean the word 'Glenover.'"

"That is a reasonable inference," Keeneyes conceded. "But if he knows that you are the abductor, and since he has been with his parents since, why have they not charged you with the crime? Why have they not demanded of you the whereabouts of their daughter?"

"That baffles me completely," Howard declared in a tone of great mental distress.

"Well, I must admit it rather staggers me," said Keeneyes, "and you cannot imagine how delightful I find it to be in the least degree staggered by a mystery. But from all this, we reach a conclusion which is simply overwhelming, and I suppose both of you see it glaring like a sun at noonday."

"What is that?" asked Jensen, cautiously.

"Why, that we must without the least delay go and examine that haystack."

"But," Howard cried, "it has been examined, every straw of it!"

"By whom?"

"By myself; and also by the farmer, Mr. Ashby."

"But not by Keeneyes, my dear fellow, not by Keeneyes."

"Of course not, since you have never been there."

"And therefore I must request you to conduct me to the spot."

"Now?"

"Certainly."

"But if we are going to do anything, shouldn't we try to trace down that man who was eavesdropping in the next room?"

Keeneyes shrugged his shoulders. "I know enough about him for the present. Let us go to the haystack while 't is still dark."

CHAPTER XXX.

IT WAS not really dark when Howard conducted the detective and the miller to the road overlooking the meadow in which he had seen Mr. Delemere. The moon had risen, but clouds obscured much of its light. However, as they drew near the meadow, the clouds rolled away, and the landscape was suddenly bathed in light.

As the three men drew near the fence, and as the moonlight flooded the pasture, Howard suddenly exclaimed, Look! look!" Howard suddenly exclaimed," Look! look!" And he pointed toward the haystack.

Near the haystack a man was slowly walking, his head dropped as in thought, his arms hanging listlessly by his side.

"Good heavens!" murmured Miller Jensen, "it's Edgar Delemere!"

"What do you say to that?" the detective asked of Howard.

"Yes, Mr. Jensen is right," Howard whispered, staring fixedly, "it's Edgar!"

Jensen started to run forward.

"Wait!" Keeneyes cautioned him. "I want to see if he will disappear as his father did. As long as I have been involved in cases of mystery, I have never yet seen a man disappear."

The distant figure slowly walked around behind the haystack.

"That's just as Mr. Delemere did," Howard murmured.

"But surely you don't call that a disappearance?" remonstrated the detective.

"If it's as it was in his father's case,

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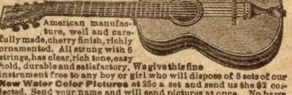

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he's not behind that haystack now," declared the young man.

"Come—we'll see," said Keeneyes, briefly. They climbed the rail fence as silently as they could, and crept across the short timothy-grass toward the haystack. They reached it, circled about it —no one was to be seen. Jensen hastily scanned the pasture. It was deserted save for themselves.

"You see!" said Howard, much disappointed at not finding Edgar, but at the same time triumphant at his own vindication.

"Yes," said the detective, "I do see." He spoke significantly.

"I meant to say," Howard corrected himself, "that you do not see."

"Oh, yes, I see clearly enough. You don't think the Delemeres were really blown to atoms, do you, and that it is their ghosts which have been flitting about since? Come. You don't believe in ghosts, I hope, even in Meadowville.

"Of course not. But——"

"But, my dear fellow, if not a ghost, your Edgar Delemere is here. You say it is impossible that he should be in the haystack. Very good. What about this old well?"

He pointed to a worm-eaten platform about four feet square, across which lay part of a rusted pump, among discarded tin buckets.

"That well," Howard shrugged his shoulders, "was filled in five years ago. If it were full of water, a person couldn't hide in it; if only partially full, a person naturally wouldn't. But there's no room for hiding left. It was filled in up to the top. Farmer Ashby knew that—he helped fill it. That's why there isn't the slightest use to examine the well."

"Very good," said the detective, cheerfully, "then what shall we examine?"

"There's nothing else to examine."

"Oh, in that case, we still have the well."

"But it was filled up to the brim, I tell you."

"Yes," Jensen agreed, "I was here at the time. And besides, if a fellow could get into it, how could he pull back the platform over himself. to say nothing of that pump and all those buckets?"

"Did you notice that dirt near the fence as we climbed over?" asked the detective.

"Where the cattle have been trampling? Yes, I saw it."

"Why do you say the cattle were trampling there? Did you see them?"

"No, but I saw the dirt."

"You saw the dirt—good. But how do you know it was not carried there from this well? You say the well was filled to the brim. How do you know that Mr. Delemere or Edgar have not dug out a nice little nest at the top of the well?"

Howard laughed.

"Let us now," Keeneyes cheerfully persisted, "examine this platform to find if there is a single plank that could be raised without disturbing the pump and the buckets. You see that the pump lies across the planks; but is there not one plank free of the pump?"

"Well——" Jensen hesitated.

Keeneyes smiled. "You do not like to admit it. That is human nature. You would rather prove yourself right when you are wrong, than be convinced of error. But this is not because you are Miller Jensen, or because you are Howarde Whittleby. It is only because you are men."

"You misjudge me," returned Howard. "I want above all things to solve the Delemere mystery, and would stop at no pains or trouble to do it. I see that there is one plank here which could be raised without any trouble. There is the plank, at the western edge of the platform. But because I know the well is filled in, and because I know nobody could hide under the platform, and because I know it would be all for nothing, I object to lifting the plank, or digging away at the well. That was my reason. That is my reason; and my only reason. If I dreamed —if I imagined that there was the slightest possibility on earth for any one to be hidden there——"

"You are quite preposterous!" Keeneyes impatiently interrupted. "You are almost unbelievable! Of course Edgar Delemere is under that plank. He couldn't be anywhere else." Keeneyes raised the board, and called down: "Come up, Mr. Edgar Delemere. It is useless for you to crouch there any longer. You are found at last. I am Keeneyes, the Detective."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN ANSWER to the stern command of the detective, a noise was heard at the mouth of the well, and the next moment the figure of a man crawled through the narrow space left by the lifted board. Edgar Delemere started out of the blackness into the moonlight with a wild, hunted look.

"Edgar!" ejaculated Howard, starting forward with outstretched hand.

"Delemere!" cried Miller Jensen. "You! What does it all mean?"

The dirt-stained, disreputable-looking young man, paying no attention to these amazed greetings, turned abruptly from the restraining hand of the detective. "Let me go!" he muttered, jerking his arm free.

"Are you Edgar Delemere?" demanded Keeneyes.

Edgar tugged violently to release himself.

"Yes, yes!" the miller averred. "It's nobody else—but he seems out of his mind, to treat old friends so unkindly."

"Let me go!" said the young man fiercely.

Keeneyes released his hold. For a moment Edgar glared at all three, then sprang away, then stopped irresolutely.

"I say," he called back to them, "I say, you know—awfully sorry, but——"

He rushed toward the fence which the three men had climbed not long since. He vaulted over the fence, then again halted, this time in the road.

He shouted to them, "I'm awfully sorry —I can't help it!" He ran along the road in the direction from town. In another minute he had disappeared.

Howard and Jensen looked at each other blankly, then at the detective.

"Why are you surprised?" Keeneyes asked rather irritably. "You've known all along that he is determined to remain hidden, like his parents. All he has now done is to carry out that idea."

"But to be hiding here!" Howard cried. "In this hole—like a rat!"

"I told you he was hiding here. He had to be here. And of course, when his father, as you said, 'vanished' he must have got into this same hole. Let us examine it."

By means of his dark-lantern, he first lowered himself into the cavity, then examined it minutely. "It's a stuffy place," he announced. "In case of rain one would be thoroughly soaked. I am convinced it is only a sort of way-station. When hard pressed, the family slip into this hole. But they must have a far better hiding-place. You can't imagine Mrs. Delemere getting into this wretched cellar."

"But why does Edgar persist in keeping out of sight and touch of his best friends?" groaned Howard.

"Possibly," Jensen grimly suggested, he knows you abducted his sister, and doesn't look upon you as one of his best friends."

"In that case, why didn't he reproach me with the abduction, or demand to know where I had taken her?"

"Come," said Keeneyes, "we've learned all we care to know at this place. Let us now hunt up the hotel near the railroad whither you tracked the disguised man that, by some marvelous workings of your imagination, you thought might be myself."

"But at this hour everything will be closed down at the hotel."

"Then we'll open everything, as we did this well. But first, in the shelter of this haystack, I'll put on my lady's garments, as it's my intention to appear at the hotel as a lady. And as it might not look well for either of you to be out with a girl at this time of night, suppose you go on to the hotel and be lounging about there when I show up."

He opened the valise which he brought along, and Howard and Jensen made haste to depart, knowing but too well how he looked the part in woman's clothes, and what excitement would spread throughout Meadowville if either of them were seen in the pasture at two or three in the morning with a feminine unknown.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN Howard and Miller Jensen reached the cheap hotel kept by Jim Tibbs, they hovered in the yard near the little front porch, until a tall, graceful lady came walking along the sidewalk and stopped before them.

"Is this the hostelry of James Tibbs, Esquire?" asked the lady, in a voice so sweet and well-modulated that it was difficult for them to believe it to be the voice of Keeneyes, the Detective. However, they knew such must be the case, so Howard answered:

"Yes. But it is closed up for the night. You see, Jim has a combination hotel and grocery here, and never expects night guests or night customers."

"That's all right," said the detective, stepping upon the porch. "You will kindly remember that I met you quite by chance on the sidewalk, and have asked you to rouse up the landlord, which you will now please do."

Jensen began beating upon the front door, and presently an irritable voice cried from above, "What's all the row?"

"It's me, Jim," called the miller. "It's Jensen."

"And what the Sam Hill does Jensen want, or anybody else want, at this time of night?" bellowed the landlord.

"Come down, Jim," Jensen called persuasively. "Come down, here is a——"

Keeneyes called, rather shrilly, "A lady."

"Here is a lady wanting to speak to you!" said Jensen.

"A what?" roared the landlord. "What did you call her?"

"Mr. Tibbs," called Keeneyes, in his best woman's voice, "you must really let me in, or I shall bring the sheriff to break down your door."

This evidently had a very strong effect; for in just the space of time necessary for the landlord to draw on a few indispensable garments and fall down the staircase—his hands on the banister breaking the shock—he was at the door.

"Now!" he growled. "What is all this about a sheriff? Oh, is that you, Howard? What are you doing out at such an hour? And you, Jensen, where did you meet this lady?"

"Mr. Tibbs," Keeneyes interposed, "it matters nothing about them, absolutely nothing. Your business is with me and with me alone. You have a guest in your

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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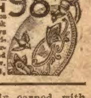

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Don't let anybody tell you that Catarrh is not curable. It can be cured. I know it. I have proved it—and will prove it to YOU —FREE of cost—NOW. Never mind what you've tried, or how many times you have been disappointed. I tried and failed for years. I cured myself—my friends—their friends. THOUSANDS have written to me and thanked me for showing them how to rid themselves of Catarrh **permanently**—right in their own home—visiting or traveling.
There may be ten thousand wrong ways, but there is ONE RIGHT WAY. I want you to know it—AT ONCE—FREE.
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You don't have to use salve, pastes, greases, jellies, lotions, ointments, sprays, atomizers, nebulizers, electricity, massage, vibration, surgery, things to smoke or burn and then inhale, plasters, masks, bandages; baths, injections, or anything of the kind.
Now that I am so willing to show you how to drive out Catarrh, you certainly ought to write and let me aid you.
Nobody suffered more than I did. I was a social outcast—a miserable failure, and because I freed myself I want to free you. The truth is FREE. It is better by far than a gift of money to you. It means Health, Happiness, **Freedom from Catarrh**—that fearful demon of disease.
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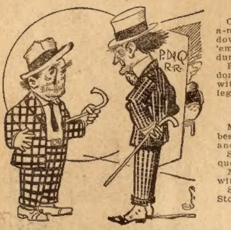


First Actor—"I tried mesmerism on that railroad official, trying to get free transportation."

Second Actor—"No go, eh?"

First Actor—"No; I made lots of passes, but I couldn't get him to make one."

Good Training.

Old Squire Grampus—"Bill Bigsnort's a-makin' a gosh rattlin' good record down thar tew Congress; Bill'll make 'em set up an' take notice. He's had durn good trainin'."

Farmer Stringem—"Yeou bet. He's done nothin' but set around Pettus' store with yeou an' other similar prominent legislators fer the last twenty years."

✤

The Wrong Sign.

Manager of Shoe Store—"I've tried my best to attract the women to this place and they simply won't come."

Salesman—"No wonder! Your sign queers the trade."

Manager (heatedly)—"What's wrong with the sign?"

Salesman—"It reads: 'The Big Shoe Store.'"

✤

A Costly Weapon.

"Did you punish your son for throwing a lump of coal at Willie Smiggs?" asked the mother.

"I did," replied the busy father. "I don't care so much for the Smiggs boy, but I can't have anybody in this family throwing coal around like that."

Kindness to a Stranger.

He was undeniably from far beyond the suburbs, and, as he was walking along a city street, he stopped in front of the fire-engine house and looked in.

"Have many fires in this town?" he asked.

"Yes, we have them pretty often," replied the fireman.

"Ever try to see how quick yew can hitch up?"

"Oh, yes."

At that moment an alarm came in. At the first stroke of the gong the men rushed to their posts, the doors of the stalls opened, and, within a few seconds, men, horses and cart were speeding down the street.

The young man watched the proceedings with admiration.

"Well," he exclaimed when speech returned, "there ain't many towns where they'd go to all that trouble to show a stranger what they can do."

✤

Appeased.

Sunday passed, Tuesday rolled around, and still his tall form did not loom in the vestibule when the cuckoo clock was sounding eight. Thursday he came, and the beautiful girl was burning with wrath.

"So this is the way you neglect me," she hissed. "What have you to say for yourself? Why didn't you come?"

"I couldn't," faltered the youth. "I had dyspepsia and the doctor advised me not to come."

"What? The doctor told you not to come to see me because you had dyspepsia?"

"Well, he told me to keep away from all sweets."

And the parlor sofa was tenanted.

✤

Accommodating.

"Speaking of accommodating hotel clerks, the best I ever saw was in a certain Maine town. I reached the hotel late in the evening. Just before I retired I heard a scampering under the bed, and saw a couple of large rats just escaping. I complained at the office. The clerk was as serene as a summer breeze.

"'I'll fix that all right, sir,' he said. 'Front! Take a cat up to room 23 at once.'"

✤

Against Water.

The temperance lecturer was getting enthusiastic and excited.

"Yes!" he shouted, "alcohol has ruined our country! It has slain its thousands and tens of thousands, but when has bright, clear water caused the death of any one?"

And then from the back of the hall, a gruff voice answered:

"When the man couldn't swim!"

✤

Plymouth Rock.

A New England schoolteacher recited "The Landing of the Pilgrims" to her pupils, then asked them to draw a picture of Plymouth Rock. One little fellow hesitated and then raised his hand.

"Well, Willie, what is it?" asked the teacher.

"Please, teacher, do you want us to draw a hen or a rooster?"

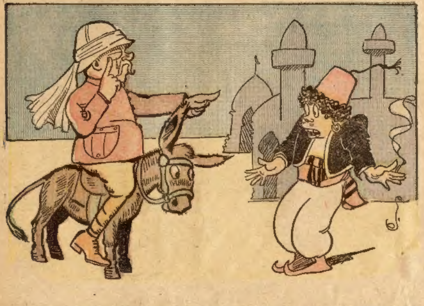
✤

Would Soon Catch It.

Tommy had been playing truant from school and had passed a long, beautiful day fishing. On his way back he met one of his young cronies, who accosted him with the usual question, "Catch anything?"

At this Tommy, in all the consciousness of guilt, quickly responded:

"Nope—ain't been home yet."



Tourist—"You'll have to give me a half rate on the sight-seeing trip I took this morning."

Guide—"Sacre elephanto! Why de half da rate?"

Tourist—"I had something in one eye and only saw half the sights."

Why He Cried.

"What's the matter, Willie?" asked his mother as the lad entered the house weeping.

"The boy across the way hit me," he replied.

"Oh, well, I wouldn't cry for that," she returned. "Show that you can be a little man."

"I ain't crying for that," he retorted.

"Then what are you crying for?"

"He ran into the house before I could get at him."

✤

Undeniable.

"One day," relates a teacher, "I gave a bright boy a problem in algebra, and although it was comparatively easy, he couldn't do it. 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself!' I remarked. 'At your age George Washington was a surveyor!' The boy looked me straight in the eyes. 'Yes, sir,' he replied, 'and at your age he was President of the United States.'"

Improved Their Appearance.

Windmill Drummer—"You don't object to city artists roaming about here? You say they improve the appearance of your stock?"

Farmer Hardapple—"By heck, yes. One dropped a tube of gold paint, the old cow ate it, and now she is going around sporting gold-filled teeth!"

✤

Not a Suffragette.

"Does your wife want the vote?"

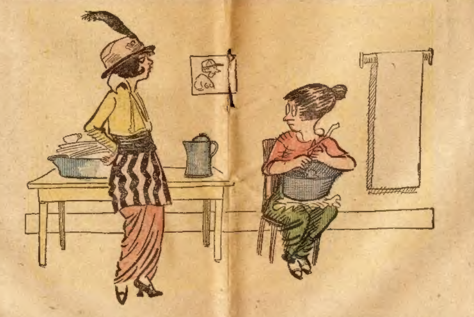
"No. She wants a larger town house, a villa on the seacoast and a new limousine car every six months. I'd be pleased if she could fix her attention on a small matter like the vote."

✤

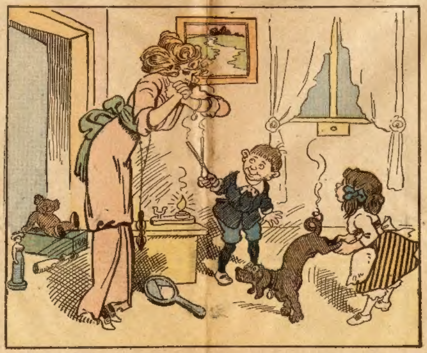
Farmer Backup—"I want to get ten cents' wuth o' stamps."

Aleck Smart (the new clerk)—"What denomination?"

Farmer Backup—"I'm a Baptist; but I don't know as it's any of your business."



Ball Player's Wife—"Never marry a ball player to reform him, Liz! They care no more for being 'beaned' with a coffee pot than nuthin' at all!"



She—"What in the world are you doing with Toto?"

The Kid—"Oh, we're only playing that he's a pig, and so we want to curl his tail."

Forehanded.

"No, my man, this is not mine. It was a twenty-dollar bill I lost."

"But it was a twinty-dollar bill before I got it changed, sor."

"What did you get it changed for?"

"Och, sure, so the owner could convayniently reward me, sor."—Puck.

Genuine.

Candidate—"Now, when you vote, don't vote for a pig in a poke; vote for me—g[illegible] the genuine [illegible]ticle."

Expecting Too Much.

Customer—"Hi, mister, I found this piece of wood in the sausage."

Waiter—"Yes, sir; but I'm sure—er——"

Customer—"Look here; I don't mind eating a bit of the dog, but I'm hanged if I'm going to tackle the kennel."

Making the Test.

A barber in a downtown shop, having been out late the night before, had a shaky hand the next morning and cut a patron's cheek four times. After each accident the barber said, as he sponged away the blood: "Oh, dear me, how careless!"

The patron took all these gashes in grave silence. But when the shave was over he filled a glass at the water cooler, took a mouthful of water, and, with compressed lips, proceeded to shake his head from side to side.

"What is the matter?" the barber asked. "You ain't got the toothache, have you?"

"No," said the customer. "I only wanted to see if my mouth would still hold water without leaking."

✤

What He Didn't Understand.

A colored man who runs a prosperous truck farm in a Southern State was purchasing various articles at a shop in Atlanta, when the proprietor ventured to suggest that he needed a barometer. An instrument was shown and the darky was treated to a long statement about indications and pressures and other things. Finally he interrupted the shopkeeper with:

"Look heah, boss. I understands 'bout all dat. What I wants to know is, how do you set de thing when you wants it to rain?"

✤

Realistic.

Petted Daughter—"They asked me to play at Mrs. Highup's this evening, and I did; but——"

Fond Mother (proudly)—"Were not they entranced?"

Petted Daughter—"Hum! When I played 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' with variations, half of them left the room."

Fond Mother (ecstatically)—"That is wonderful! They must have felt seasick."

✤

Easily Done.

They had been making hay while the sun shone, and when they had finished a high haystack the farmer's boy shouted from the top: "Say, mister, how am I going to get down?"

The farmer considered the problem and finally solved it:

"Oh, jest shet yer eyes an' walk around a bit."

✤

Couldn't Fool Him.

The farmer had bought a pair of shoes in the city shop. "Now, can't I sell you a pair of shoe trees?" suggested the clerk.

"Don't git fresh with me, sonny!" replied the farmer, bristling up; "I don't believe shoes kin be raised on trees any more'n I believe rubbers grow on rubber trees or oysters on the oyster plants, b'gosh!"

✤

Grandma Bites.

Bobby (to grandmother)—"Grandma, have you ever seen an engine wagging its ears?"

Grandma—"No; nonsense, Bobby. I never heard of an engine having any ears."

Bobby—"Why, haven't you heard of engineers?"

✤

Changing Around.

Neighbor—"Every time you feed your dog he brings the bones over and gnaws them on my premises. Isn't there some way to stop it?"

Owner—"Suppose you feed him hereafter, and then he will probably bring them over and gnaw them on my premises."

A Fashionable Practice.

"Doctor, I want you to look after my office while I'm on my vacation."

"But I've just graduated, Doctor. I have had no experience."

"That's all right, my boy. My practice is strictly fashionable. Tell the men to play golf and ship the women off to Atlantic City."

✤

Made a Mistake.

"Hi, waiter! This chicken is mighty tough."

"Very sorry, sir, but when we came to kill it we couldn't catch it, so at last we had to shoot the bird as it flew onto the barn."

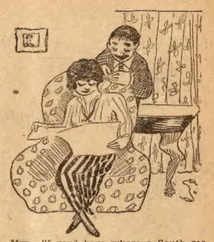
"Blast it! You must have shot the weathercock by mistake!"

✤

Domestic Science.

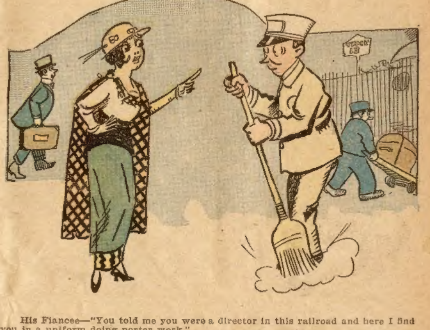
Mrs. Burns—"Rose, what a kitchen! Every pot, pan, and dish is soiled; the table looks like the day after a cyclone! What have you been doing?"

Rose—"Well, ma'am, the young ladies are just after showing me how they bile a pertater at cooking school."



Mrs.—"I read here where a South sea island wife isn't supposed to talk until her husband speaks first."

Mr.—"And I'll bet some of those fool husbands do it."



His Fiancee—"You told me you were a director in this railroad and here I find you in a uniform doing porter work."

The Official—"So I am a director. Just stick around a little while and you'll see me directing the passengers to their trains."

The Cause.

Not long since a Scotch school board inspector asked the members of a class that was under examination:

"What is the cause of the saltiness of the ocean?"

Flushed with the discovery which had flashed upon her mind, one little girl raised her hand.

"You may tell," said the inspector.

"Salt fish, sir!" exclaimed the pupil triumphantly.

✤

No Need to Fear.

Early one morning, on the second day out, a terribly seasick passenger, pale and hollow-eyed, came out of his stateroom and ran into a lady who was coming along the passageway clad in the scantiest raiment. She screamed and started to run.

"Don't be alarmed!" groaned the man. "Don't be alarmed, madam; I shall never live to tell it."

Could Be Improved.

A Dane who owned a farm in Kansas applied for naturalization papers, says an exchange.

The judge asked him:

"Are you satisfied with the general conditions of the country?"

"Yas," drawled the Dane.

"Does the form of government suit you?" queried the judge.

"Yas, yas; only I would like to see more rain," replied the farmer.

✤

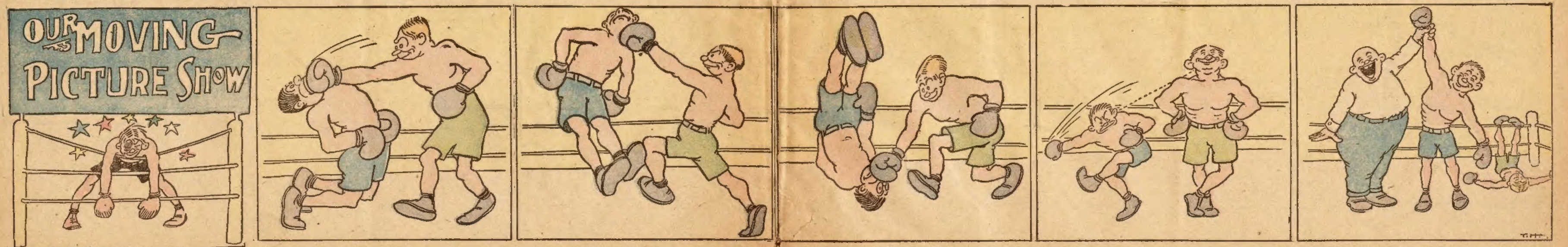
He Got Plenty.

They had just become engaged.

"Oh, Will," she said, moving a trifle closer to him. "I am so glad you are not rich! They say that some of those millionaires receive threatening letters saying that something dreadful will happen to them if they don't pay the writers sums of money."

"Oh, is that all?" replied Will. "Why, I get plenty of such letters."

KELLY GETS A SURPRISE



Knock-'Em-Dead-Kelly—"Gee, but this 'Mike-the Mut' is a cinch! I kin hit him anywhere I please!"

Kelly—"Here, son, is another swipe! How's that for a haymaker?"

Kelly—"Now, 'nother little tap on the kisser an' out he goes!"

Kelly—"Ladies an' gents, it's a shame t' take yer money, but——"

Mike-the-Mut—"He thinks I'm knocked out, eh? Here's one fer his jaw!" (Bing).

Referee—"Ladies an' gents, Mike-the-Mut wins the fight by a knockout blow on Kelly's jaw!"

OUT WEST STORIES

AN OUTRIDDEN VENGEANCE

By William MacLeod Raine

A MAN sat on the porch of the agency store at Hat Creek, his chair tipped back against a post so that his black, half-shuttered eyes could command both the inside of the building and the road which twisted round and over the endless waves of the desert sea. From one of these billows rose a traveling cloud of white dust, so thick as to conceal the animating cause of it.

On the store steps sat a second man, chewing tobacco and whittling lazily on a pine stick. His indeterminate features suggested that they, too, might have been whittled out, crudely, during the spare moments of a craftsman not deeply interested in his work. For Bud Oakley—he was still Bud in spite of the grizzled age that was creeping upon him—was of the sort that does not count in the West. Not even a galvanic force could find lodgment in that indecisive, amiable mouth or those pale eyes so humorous and conciliatory. His head lifted toward the dust cloud.

"The stage, I reckon. The new storekeeper ought to be on it today."

The gaze of the man in the chair shifted to the whittler, rested upon him an instant, then passed to the slim girl within the store cutting tobacco for a flat-footed squaw in a bright-hued blanket.

"Young?" he demanded. Matt Prideaux was a man of few words.

"A kid, they say. Just out from Peoria, Ill."

Prideaux asked no more questions. But in the narrowing of his eyes one could see the wariness of the beast of prey. Far as the Santa Rita stretched he was known as a killer, but even without that knowledge one would have been held by that something strong and cruel lurking in the bleak, cold eyes, in the shape of the thin, tight lips, in the spring-coiled alertness of the pose.

The man that did not count spoke again. He sensed that Prideaux was annoyed, and with spineless facility he adapted himself to the other's mood.

"Yes, by jollies, from Peoria, Ill. A doughbelly. Sure to be a smart aleck. Don't you know it?"

The bad man's teeth showed for an instant. He was still looking at the slight, deft-fingered girl, and his scowl was both sullen and proprietary. Still he said nothing.

"Let him try it with Allie, and he'll get his come-uppings. She wouldn't stand for it a minute. Me neither. Not a minute, by jollies," the invertebrate averred fervently. He was the father of the girl within. That she was eventually to be the wife and property of Prideaux he accepted as axiomatic.

From the stage descended a young man with a suitcase. Slight, pallid and a trifle stooped, he was unmistakably a product of the city. His gentle smile, which seemed to apologize for that regrettable fact, was a letter of recommendation. For the eyes blinking behind the glasses were as honest and blue as an Arizona sky.

Prideaux stood at the top of the steps with a sneer on his lean, hard face. A glance swept the newcomer, and with one contemptuous word he turned on jingling heel.

"Hell!"

The tenderfoot had been appraised, condemned and dismissed from mind as negligible.

But before Prideaux had taken three steps, he wheeled again angrily. Allie had flashed past him, her eyes shining with resentment, and was offering her hand to the insulted clerk.

"You're the new storekeeper, aren't you? I'm Alice Oakley. I help in the store. We're glad to meet you."

His smile came quickly back. "Same here, Miss Oakley. Yes, I'm the storekeeper. My name is Arnett—Joe Arnett."

They paused inside together. Prideaux's jaws clamped furiously, and his fists knotted till the veins swelled.

"Looked like he was aimin' to throw the kid offen the porch and stomp him into the ground. 'F he had I reckon they would have had to pick him out o' the dust with a pair of pincers," Bud Oakley explained later.

The bad man strode to his horse, flung himself into the saddle, and rode blindly away. Jealousy surged through him in heady gusts. Alice Oakley, promised to him by her father though she was, had never looked on him with such kindly eyes as she had given this puny boy. His bloody spurs roweled mercilessly the half-tamed horse he rode.

Joe Arnett fell into his work easily and inconspicuously. The reservation Indians called him Four Eyes, and liked his courtesy to them. There was nothing about his quiet, friendly reserve to tempt the rough horseplay of the Santa Rita riders who sometimes drifted in to buy airtights and talk with pretty Allie. Nor would she have permitted any liberties. She liked the tenderfoot, his gentleness, his shyness, his inability to meet the frontier on its own ground. Moreover, he was opening to her a new world, one she had known only in books. There was in both of them a touch of the poet, the facile imagination that interprets and takes hold of the unknown. His experience complemented hers, and neither of them were ever tired of hearing about that strange life the other had lived. For her the cities were pregnant with romance. She saw New York and Chicago through that hazy light that never was on land or sea. He made of sunburnt Arizona—especially in that evening atmosphere when velvet dusk was over the valley like a sea of soft and tempered light—an Arcady primeval, helped to it no doubt because of the slender, light-footed friend who watched with him the mellow violet haze upon the saw-toothed peaks.

Emotions new and poignant had come to disturb the calm of both their lives. It came to pass as the weeks slipped away that the frankness of their comradeship was gone. Alice, whose eyes had looked at men simply and directly as those of a boy, was becoming self-conscious. She learned the trick of blushing at times when she least expected.

Uneasily, too, she was aware that Prideaux was watching Arnett. She had the sense that he was stalking them as a cougar does its kill, with the same stealthy, relentless patience of that mountain terror on its soft-padded crouching hunt. More than once while she was in gay, happy talk with the storekeeper, a sinister shadow fell across them. Prideaux's cold, deadly eyes met her startled ones. A shiver would run down her back, for she had not known him to be within twenty miles. A premonition of danger haunted Allie. Her knowledge of the man was enough to teach her he would let nobody stand between him and the things he coveted. It had always been so with him. His outrageous defiance of justice, the contempt with which he had trampled on the pride of the Apache braves, had taken their horses at his own price, and ignored their tribal laws, all these had won the undying hatred of the natives. Yet he went his own way and rode over them heedlessly, trod down as if they had been childish complaints the remonstrances of these old-time man-hunters who had left the trail of blood along the border. From such a one no tame surrender of the girl he wanted was to be expected.

Yet, as always, red tragedy when it did come leaped upon them unexpectedly. On a Sunday evening Prideaux rode to the store and found the whittler on the porch alone.

"Evenin', Matt. In for plumb hot weather, looks like."

"Where's Allie?"

"Out with Peoria, Ill. I told her, by jollies, she hadn't ought to go. I ain't responsible. Nowadays a father don't have the say-so over his own daughter. Don't you know it? I reckon I'll have to have a talk and lay down the law to that young lady. Eh, Matt?"

Prideaux's face was a picture of resentful malice. "I'll do the talking. Which way did they go?"

"Took the Box Canyon trail; said they wasn't going to walk but a little ways."

Prideaux strode up the steep path, the long-smoldering anger in him ablaze. He moved lightly, gracefully, for his steel-tough flowing muscles were superbly packed, and the sap of youth still ran strong in him.

Oakley was vaguely alarmed. He scratched his head in perplexity. "Wisht I hadn't told Matt where they was. He's liable to do that tenderfoot a meanness. Oh, well, he won't any more'n cuss a blue streak and mebbe beat the head off Peoria, Ill."

The ranchman had followed the trail scarce two hundred yards before he came on those he sought. They were in a little grove of live oaks into which the sifted moonlight filtered softly. A moment sooner, and he would have been in time to see their first kiss. As it was, they stood with hands locked, looking into each other's eyes with the ecstatic, absorbed look of newly confessed lovers.

Prideaux's smothered oath brought them back to earth. Their hands fell apart hurriedly. In the eyes of both was the startled, telltale look of children caught stealing jam.

"Matt!" the girl cried, as the man came striding toward them.

He ignored her completely. To young Arnett he spoke, the veins in his forehead swollen with rage.

"Git! I've had enough of you! Clear out of the country pronto!"

"Out of the country," Joe repeated in amazement.

"You heard me."

"But, Mr. Prideaux, I can't do that. My living is here. Besides, why should I?"

"Because I'm going to fill you full of lead if you're here this time tomorrow. I've had a-plenty of you."

"I haven't done you any harm," the youngster retorted, with a flash of spirit. "This is a free country. You can't drive me out."

"Go or stay, I don't care which. But if you stay, it'll be for good." The ranchman laughed, and the sound of it was appalling.

Allie cut in, white to the lips. "You mean that you're going to—to murder him?"

"I've served notice. It's him or me."

He turned to go. Lithely she twisted in front of him and barred the way. "Wait."

She stood lance-straight, a slender slip of a girl he could have crushed with one hand. But in the challenging flash of her deep eyes a new fire had been lighted. Man of small imagination though he was, it was impossible to miss the gallant spirit his threat had struck to life.

"If you do this—if you touch a hair of his head—as surely as you do I'll never speak to you again, never look at you any more than I would at a rattlesnake."

He stared, fascinated, his eyes narrowed and smoldering slits. "So that's it. You're making a play for to stand between him and me."

"Yes. I won't have it! I won't have it!" she cried, a little wildly.

"You won't? Why not?" His voice was silken soft, but she knew that beneath the surface the anger in him was cold and hard as granite.

Under the brave, tilted chin a pulse was beating fast in the soft round throat. All her life she had been afraid of his splenetic and vindictive anger, of the quality in him that had dominated her father and herself. But with this, too, had always been admiration of the stark force of the man. The courage of him had cloaked his vices. Now she saw him as he was, hard, cruel, vicious, bad at heart to the core. Gustily the revolt of years in her boiled over.

"Because I love him. Because I'm going to marry him. That's why."

Again he laughed, and in his mirthless laughter all the evil of him appeared to find expression.

"You better hurry, my dear. For he ain't got long to live. Look at him. See how yellow he is. Right now he's an awful sick pup. It'll be a right short honeymoon. You'll be maid, wife, and widow all in twenty-four hours." His black, beady eyes focused once more on the Easterner. "Remember. Tomorrow

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at sunset. I'll be here like I said. And you needn't try to pull your freight. I've changed my mind. You and me will see this out to a finish."

With that he was gone, leaving behind him a distress beyond words. Allie leaned against a live oak, her interlaced fingers writhing in impotent despair. She was no heroine of romance, but what the sun and the wind and a clean, sweet spirit had made her. If she could be brave, she could be afraid, too, especially for those she loved. Now terror held her heart in an icy clutch. She did not deceive herself. Matt Prideaux would take care her lover did not escape, and when the time came he would snuff out his life ruthlessly

"Don't you, Allie! Don't you take on so!" Arnett pleaded.

"It's all my fault. If I hadn't told him you might have slipped away, but now——"

He shook his head. "No. I wouldn't have gone."

The girl roused herself. The eagerness of hope came into her eyes. "You can get away by the Mal Pais trail. He'll not think of that. Ride hard and you can reach the railroad tomorrow night."

"And leave you here?"

"What does that matter? I can join you later."

"No. I'm going to stay."

Her gaze read his thoughts. No man under fire could run away from the woman he loved and hold his self-respect. It might be an unequal battle, but he could not shirk it and leave her alone to cope with this wolf. Face to face with Prideaux, her lover had been entirely inadequate to the situation because his training had not fitted him for it. But she felt now a tightening of his will, something in him indomitable and dogged that would choose death rather than disgrace. She loved him for it. Her spirit leaped to meet his.

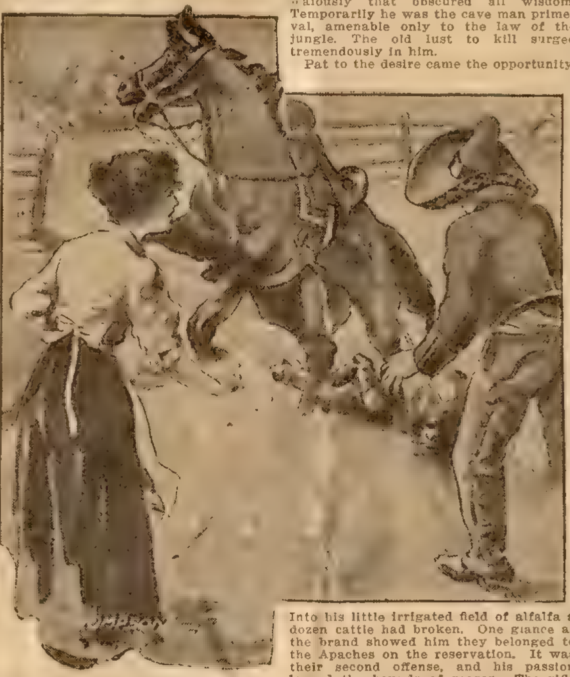
"We'll go together—tonight—as soon as it is dark," she whispered.

In the moonlight her eyes were shining with resolution. He caught her hands.

"You mean you'll go with me—leave your father."

"He doesn't need me now he is married again. Your way shall be my way, and your people my people."

She was in his arms, crying and laughing hysterically. Joe knew that he could not deny her imperious decision even if he had wished. She would take the desert trail with him and share all its difficulties and dangers.



The broncho had brought its master to keep his appointment.

They made their preparations swiftly and secretly. The canteens were filled and a pair of saddlebags packed with food. Allie took nothing with her except the khaki riding suit she wore. His watch showed eleven o'clock when they stole out to the corral, saddled the ponies Arnett had run up from the pasture, and took the long trail leading into the bad lands. The little valley which led down into the desert had been by day a glowing vignette of gold and russet, but in the soft moonlight it was toned to a cool, silvery glamour only the Southwest can show. They rode in silence, with no sound save the occasional jingling of a bit or the strike of a hoof on a loose stone.

The valley descended into a long, flat plain of cactus and greasewood, terminating in the far distant dwarf mountains that were rooted wraithlike at the horizon edge. Here, at the entrance to the Mal Pais, they pulled up an instant.

Allie drew a long breath and spoke eagerly. "Safe at last. He can never find us in Mal Pais."

A low, sinister laugh mocked her, and at the sound of it a cold fear drenched the heart of the girl. Before looking around she knew that their enemy had trapped them, had guessed what they would do and forestalled them. He was sitting on the bowlder behind which he must have been lying when they passed, his evil triumphant smile framed in moonshine. Across his knees a rifle lay negligently.

"Evening, friends. Just out for a little pasear, I expect."

"You devil!" the boy cried passionately.

Prideaux looked at him without speaking. A volcanic rage boiled beneath that still, contained manner of his. His finger itched to be at the trigger of his Winchester.

"What are you going to do with us?" Allie asked hopelessly

"Going to chaperoon you home again, my dear. My intentions as to him have been declared already."

They rode back in front of him, defeated and despairing. To both of them it seemed he was of a power more than mortal, an irresistible force against which it was no use fighting. No thought of resistance occurred to either of them, though Arnett, too, was armed with a rifle.

Prideaux left Allie at her father's house, locked in her bedroom by Bud, whose mild ineffectiveness was for the moment stimulated into something like anger by the elopement. For Arnett the bad man had only one word before he rode away.

"You're being watched. The passes are guarded. Make another break and you'll stay down in the Mal Pais for good."

The ranchman's victory had been a barren one. He knew that to Allie Oakley he was only a hated intruder. Her every look had told that she loved this Easterner who had not the sand to stand up and fight for her. The certainty of it seared itself into his brain, flooded his irresponsible mind with a touch of blind madness. He pounded furiously homeward, driven by a storm of wild jealously that obscured all wisdom. Temporarily he was the cave man primeval, amenable only to the law of the jungle. The old lust to kill surged tremendously in him.

Pat to the desire came the opportunity. Into his little irrigated field of alfalfa a dozen cattle had broken. One glance at the brand showed him they belonged to the Apaches on the reservation. It was their second offense, and his passion leaped the bounds of reason. The rifle cracked again and again. Before the magazine was empty nine of the animals had fallen beneath his sure aim.

He stood and stared at the havoc he had wrought, at the awful wanton thing he had done. In the cow country cattle are sacred, and his fury had massacred them wholesale.

Even as he looked an Indian rode over the crest of the hill. His impassive face swept over the field and rested on Prideaux.

"You pay?" he said quietly.

The white man's arrogance would not submit to being brought to task by an Indian. "Not by a damned sight. They were in my alfalfa."

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Years before, in the days when he was a very young man, Prideaux had been taken into blood brotherhood by the tribe. They had called him Gray Fox, and the bond had been sealed by his marriage to one of the young women of the tribe. She had died within the year. The young cowpuncher had drifted back to his own race and the tribal relationship had never been renewed. Running Cloud was reminding him now that he was subject to the common law governing the tribe.

"Not a red cent! Keep your cattle off my range!" the rancher retorted angrily.

"Let Gray Fox take care. Let him remember the tribal law. Running Cloud speaks with no forked tongue."

Prideaux, knowing himself in the wrong, yielded to one of his ungovernable rages and turned his weapon upon Running Cloud.

"Git, you d—d Injun, or I'll pump holes in you like I did your cows."

The native wheeled his pony and dashed off. As he disappeared over the hill he flung up an arm and shook a closed hand at the former squaw man. Prideaux's rifle leaped to his shoulder and covered Running Cloud. The hammer fell harmlessly upon an empty shell.

An hour later Running Cloud carried his news into the sleeping camp of the Indians. Till gray dawn the chiefs took council round the campfire. Then the young men rose, knowing what they had to do, and slipped away silently on the trail.

All day they watched from the hills above the Prideaux ranch, themselves unnoticed. At sunset the owner of the ranch saddled his scarce broken broncho, and took the road for the agency. Signals flashed from hill to hill. The painted tribesmen slipped down from draw and arroyo. The long-delayed vengeance of his blood brothers was closing in on Gray Fox.

All night and all day Allie had gone about with a mortal sickness in her face. With the coming of morning she had taken her place as usual in the store. Through the lagging hours she had sold canned goods and powder and coffee, while all the time the chill dread of what was to come lay heavy upon her aching heart. Not for a moment did she doubt that Prideaux would keep his word. It was a boast of the man that he never "rued back."

Her thoughts kept miserable company with those of her lover. She had pleaded with him to try an escape into the desert, but he had steadily refused. There was no hope in him, but the compulsion of his self-respect would not let him run away.

The day, it seemed to her, would never end. Yet when at last the sun slid down behind a crotch of the hills it came to her with a crash of the senses that the hour was upon them.

As in a dream she heard a voice outside cry, "Here he comes," saw her lover reach for the rifle he scarce knew how to fire, and watched him step to the door. She woke from the nightmare that had held her, and with a cry of horror ran forward.

No rifle shot broke the stillness. Her first sweeping glance saw only a riderless horse galloping heavily down the trail. The animal was saddled, and behind it something dragged and bumped over the rough path.

A vaquero who had just ridden up gave a startled cry. His lariat swept forward and jerked to a halt the laboring horse. Allie saw that the animal was stained with sweat and wild with fright. Then her eyes traveled to the limp and horrible thing fastened by rawhide thongs to its tail and to the horn of the saddle. It was the lifeless body of a man.

The vaquero, knife in hand, ran forward to cut the ropes, but stopped with a cry of recognition.

"My God, it's Matt!"

The truth flashed upon Allie picture after picture. She saw the man coming to keep his threatened tryst of revenge, the lurking Apaches, the desperate struggle and capture. Her imagination visioned him tied alive to the heels of his own wild horse, the crazed beast tearing down the rough mountainside. Now, by some strange irony of fate, the broncho had brought its master to keep his appointment at the very place and hour set for it. But the vengeance of the Apache had outridden his.

With a sobbing cry Allie covered her eyes and ran into the house. Out of a gray haggard face Arnett looked down upon the enemy Providence had snatched from his path. He was still trembling with the nervous chill that had been on him.

Oakley put a hand on his shoulder. "We're in luck, boy. If Matt had been alive he would have got you like he promised. It had to be you or him."

Joe nodded, then without speaking dropped the rifle and followed Allie into the house.

In next week's Ledger will appear another story of this series. It will depict the nerve and resource of a "one-lung" telegraph operator at a lonely little station on the edge of the Rockies, and is entitled, "Relief at Relief." Be sure and read it.

Her Brother.

"The only thing my brother will do for me is fight!" complained Angela to her friend Gladys.

"He'll never take me anywhere. He'll never do a thing for me! Now the girl next door—he'll do anything on earth for her! He even goes over there and digs in her garden. I'd like to see him do that fore me! And I'd do anything for him!

"I got into a lot of trouble on his account the very last time I went to a dance. Roy Rowley took me to the dance, and he always carries my slippers in my slipper bag. My brother didn't go straight to the dance. He had to go somewhere else first, so I offered to take his slippers for him in the bag with mine. And Roy carried them.

"We hadn't gone very far when Roy remarked that my slippers were certainly much heavier than usual. I didn't say anything, and he became suspicious and opened the bag. When he saw that he was carrying a man's slippers he was furious and threw them as far as he could—each one in a different direction!

"My brother objects to nearly every dress I get. He says some of my dresses will get him into a fight yet. He even complains of the way I fix my hair. He doesn't like it with ribbons in it. But when the girl next door puts ribbons on her hair he thinks it is cute. Every one of those things that he complains of in me he thinks cute in the girl next door!"

"I suspect he isn't engaged to the girl next door, then," surmised Gladys. "If he were he would be just as exacting with her as he is with you."

"That's right," answered Angela. "A man you're engaged to is sometimes worse than a brother. Brothers are never jealous, anyway. You see it was jealousy that made Roy throw those slippers away. He thought I was having him carry some rival's slippers. But I can forgive the jealousy. I think it is cute in a suitor, but I hate the brotherly criticism."

Used His Eyes.

In his daily half-hour confidential talk with his boy an ambitious father tried to give some good advice.

"Be observing, my son," said the father. "Cultivate the habit of seeing and you will be a successful man. Study things and remember them. Don't go through the world blindly. Learn to use your eyes. Boys who are observing know a great deal more than those who are not."

Willie listened in silence.

Several days later when the entire family, consisting of his mother, aunt and uncle, were present, his father said:

"Well, Willie, have you kept using your eyes as I advised you to do?"

Willie nodded and after a moment's hesitation said:

"I've seen a few things right around the house. Uncle Jim's got a bottle of hair dye hid under his trunk, Aunt Jennie's got an extra set of teeth in her dresser, ma's got some curls in her hat and pa's got a deck of cards and a box of chips behind the books in the secretary."

* * *

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The Purple Princess

(Continued from page three.)

packet, from which fell a glittering object. Marc stooped and picked it up.

"By my troth, 'tis a ring!" cried he, in astonishment. "What a trophy to fall into our hands."

A pair of staring eyes looked out over Eudora's pallid cheeks and Marc noticed that her hands trembled.

"There is writing on the paper," continued Marc. "May it not be the lapidary's guarantee?"

"It is more than that," said the Princess, through set teeth, as she crushed the paper in her hand. "We shall see if the mountain brigand lies."

She placed the ring and writing in a pocket of her dress and turned away.

"We can sleep now," she continued, glancing up at young Marc. "Black Karl and his minions have gone back to their lair. I thank you, Marc," and she put out her hand for a good night kiss.

Once in her chamber the Purple Princess almost staggered to a chair and threw herself into it. A light was burning above her head, and revealed the whiteness of her countenance.

Slowly she drew forth the one trophy of the night foray and placed it on the purple cloth before her. The ring was a triumph of the jeweler's art. It blazed with diamonds, the center one being one of great value. She had never seen such a brilliant before.

Then she turned to the writing and bent over it.

"With this ring," she read, "I wed the most beautiful woman in all Germany. No one shall prevent me from placing it on the hand of Lady Eudora. Neither the angels of heaven nor the friends of perdition shall prevent me from wedding the Purple Princess of Castle Marx."

In a fit of rage Eudora flung the bauble from her, and it clicked against the wall at the far side of the chamber.

"It is a lie!" cried she, the words rasping from her in her madness. "Loved by the Emperor Francis and the robber of the mountains, I am in a veritable circle of passion. But I have Marc. What will the outcome be?"

She whirled in her passion and opened a secret door in the gray wall. A dozen good blades were suspended in the hidden compartment, and the Purple Princess, tearing one from its fastenings, turned back into the light.

"As long as I have this, my father's battle sword, I will defend my honor, and woe to the wretch, crowned or otherwise, who would drag me to an altar I detest!" And the ring of steel on the table emphasized her vow.

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

* * *

Detective Keeneyes' Craft.

(Continued from page nine.)

house by the name of Timothy Bear. Do not deny it. These gentlemen saw him come here, heard him engage his room, witnessed his signature in your book of registration——"

"Why, good gracious, madam, I don't want to deny it! Why should I? Of course I've got a boarder here by the name of Bear. And what of it? I'm not going to have my boarders disturbed at this time of night by anybody, unless it's their express wish; and even if it was his express wish, I'd not wake up Mr. Bear to tell him there's a stranger here, a strange woman, asking for him."

"But, Mr. Tibbs," said Keeneyes, affectedly, "I'm the she-Bear."

"Eh? What? How?"

"Mr. Tibbs, I am Mrs. Bear, and I demand my husband. Either take me to his chamber at once, or bring him to me. I am Mrs. Bear. I will not be kept away from my lord and master. Where is his room?" And he pushed past the astonished landlord into the house.

"I've got nothing to do with his wife," said the landlord. "But why didn't you come when he did?"

"Because he has eluded me—he would escape from me, would cast me off. But he shall not cast me off. He is my man, and I shall go to my man. Where is his room?"

"I can show you his room," said Jensen, impatiently. "Come on."

"No," said Jim Tibbs, "I'll show the way myself; and if you are really his wife, of course, I've got no more to say."

All this time Jim Tibbs had been holding a coal-oil lamp in his hand. He now went forward followed by the lady, while behind her came Jensen and Howard Whittleby. At the end of the upstairs hall, the landlord stopped and knocked upon a door. At first there was no response, then a sleepy voice mumbled, "What is it?"

"Oh," shrieked Keeneyes, "it is my Timothy's voice I hear!"

"Mr. Bear," called the landlord, who had taken a strong distaste to the detective's voice and manner, and seemed put more and more on edge the longer they were together, "here's your wife out here, wanting to get in."

"To get in?" cried the voice, suddenly wide-awake. "To get in where? You go away from my door and leave me alone."

"Timothy!" cried Keeneyes, hysterically. "My own!"

"Mr. Bear," called the landlord, "your wife wants in."

"My wife isn't in this town!" retorted the voice. "Tell her to go away."

"Timothy," cried Keeneyes, "don't you know me?"

"You go away!" shouted the voice, in desperation. "I know nothing about you."

"I don't know what to do," muttered the landlord. "You'll have to wait till you get your sheriff, I reckon. He doesn't acknowledge you."

"Try once again," said Jensen. "This is monstrous!"

"Mr. Bear," called Tibbs, "if you want to avoid any trouble I advise you to see the lady and at least find out what she wants."

"Mighty well does he know what I want," sobbed Keeneyes.

Silence from the beleaguered room.

"Well," called Howard, "what are you going to do?"

No answer.

"I understand," said Keeneyes, suddenly drying his tears, "he is making his escape through the window! Quick!" Gathering up his skirts in a way that made Mr. Tibbs blush, the detective rushed downstairs and outdoors followed by Howard and Jensen.

This mysterious story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

CAUSE FOR TEARS.

"What are you crying about, dear?"

"Oh, mamma, I don't know whatever in the world I am going to do!"

"Well, the first thing you are going to do is to get a purple nose and puffy eyes, if you don't stop crying!"

"You know, mamma, Jim wanted to come out last night——"

"I didn't know about last night, particularly, but I had a hazy idea that Jim was in the habit of wanting to come out every night."

"That's just it, mamma, and Fred wanted to come out last night, too."

"Yes, Fred is a pretty steady wanter, too."

"Yes, sir, mamma, and Arthur wanted to come out, too! But I had wanted to stay right home with you last night. I was worn out. So I told Jim I had a headache, and I told Fred I wasn't feeling well, and I told Arthur you weren't feeling well, and I told all of them and each of them that they must not come out—that I was not even going to dress up. And then John telephoned—John, common old John, the least attractive and the hardest to talk to of the entire lot—and he wanted me to go to the picture show, and just because I had storied as much as I could I told him to come on, if he insisted."

"I did not know of that, Polly."

"Well, we went down to the Queen, and we sat in a back seat so that I would not need to remove my hat. John is perfectly lovely in his understanding of such things. I felt somebody's eyes boring into the back of my neck, and, I knew it was a horrid thing to do, but finally I turned and looked, and there was Jim looking right square at me with an expression angry enough to have shriveled me up and set fire to the seat I sat in. I caught hold of John's sleeve and dragged him away from there without waiting for the end of the picture! John cracked some joke about it, which I was too utterly miserable to see the point to, and went right along with me.

"Then we went to the Rex. It was crowded, and we went down half the length of the house before we saw two vacant seats. Something made me look at the last man in the row before I got to the vacant seats, and there I stood looking into Arthur's eyes, and so near to him that his nose almost rubbed the powder from my nose!

"So I went past those vacant seats, climbed over the people on the other side of them, went down the aisle and out of the house, and John with me—I couldn't lose John! Then we had a drink of soda and went to the Isis. I was wondering if I couldn't do my hair up in the same nifty style as that of the girl in front of me when her escort turned about and looked at me. It was Fred. I wanted to die, and to die right then!

"It was the most miserable evening I ever put in in my life, and John was responsible for the whole thing. And then, when we got upon the porch, the great big, rough creature, whom I have trampled upon and flouted and pushed out of my way, put his arms right around me and asked me to marry him!"

"Of course you told him you wouldn't?"

"Of course I told him I would! How in the world else could I have got even with him?"

"Oh, Polly, Polly, I am so glad! But, my dear baby, why are you crying?"

"I have a right to be glad, too, haven't I?"

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Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday
By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Europe seems to be trying to commit suicide.

Another and more popular declaration of war is that on high prices.

Where is the hand that will switch off the lights from the theater of war?

If this is not to be the last great war civilization should apply for a receiver.

Soon the forces will have to be mobilized for the annual war on hay fever.

Forehanded Chicago must be prepared to export fashions to Paris after the war.

There is still hope that the beautiful blue Danube will not become the awfully red Danube.

Next to the bravery of the Belgians is that of the head of the household who enlists to fire the cook.

Japan would like to take a hand in the fighting, and, if not a hand, a foot or an ear, or something.

Those twenty peace treaties that passed the United States Senate seem almost like anachronisms just now.

When the armies of Europe get through shuffling the cards there may be some kings missing from the deck.

Opera singers returning home to fight will serve in the navy because of their familiarity with the high C's.

King George has ordered the abandonment of the Cowes regatta, but that does not mean that Great Britain is cowed.

One gleam in the cloud is seen in the announcement that a new "extra ultra outre" French style in woman's dress will be shelved during the war season.

It is now the province of public officials to make sure that there is no triple alliance of producers, commission men, and distributers of foodstuffs.

If some one had only interested the crowned heads of Europe in baseball or roque or something equally peaceful but engrossing, perhaps the map makers would not now be so joyous.

Foreign reservists in this country have not yet seen fit to take the advice to "pair," so we suggest that a reservist be exchanged for each American refugee until the latter are all back home.

So long as man continues to build his home on a slope of a quiescent volcano and his hopes of peace on large fighting machines, just so long must he expect painful surprises.

De la Ferte said "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions," and Napoleon said "Providence is always on the side of the last reserve." This won't stop the prayers of the weak, but it must be discouraging to know that the other fellow has the guns.

The Young Guardsman

Or, Jack Winslow at Waterloo

By Captain Jack Judson

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CHAPTER I.

OFF TO THE WAR.

"MAY I go back with you, Uncle Cecil?"

Colonel Cecil Willoughby of the Life Guardsmen looked over his newspaper at his nephew, Jack Winslow, and smiled.

"So you would like to see a little of army life, Jack?" said he.

"That I would," answered the sturdy youth, eagerly.

"We may have war by and by."

"Which would please me the more."

"Well," returned the Colonel, laying the paper down, "I will consult your father——"

"I have his consent already," interrupted the boy, his face glowing with anticipation. "You have but to mention the matter to him, I am sure."

Colonel Willoughby arose and glanced at his watch.

"I am due at the War Office in thirty minutes," he remarked. "I promise you, Jack, that I won't forget this little matter," and the following minute he passed from the room.

"I don't see why I can't see something of the world," mused the youth. "I don't like to be cooped up in London all the time. It would be nice to don a red uniform and serve the King. Uncle Cecil says we may have war, but I can't imagine where it is to start from. Napoleon is cooped up at Elba, and is likely to stay there with his wings clipped like a captive eagle and——"

Just then the door was flung open, and a boy of Jack's age, with eyes aflame with excitement, burst into the room.

"Have you heard the news, Jack?" he cried.

"No, Neville, I've heard nothing."

"It's going everywhere. London is full of it. A courier has just arrived with the tidings. Napoleon has escaped from Elba and is preparing to regain his throne."

Jack Winslow was on his feet instanter.

"The eagle at large?" he exclaimed. "I can hardly believe it, Neville."

"But it must be true. There will be war again, and if we could get into it somehow——"

"I think I shall go," broke in Jack, trying to speak calmly. "Of course, Uncle Cecil will be ordered to the front at once, and if good pleading avails anything, I won't be far behind him."

"You're the luckiest fellow in the world, Jack. Here I will have to stay in old London with my dull books while you are helping to thrash the Emperor."

"Don't get downhearted. I will put in a word for you, Neville. I think I have some influence with the Colonel. He may need two aides, for two heads are better than one and——"

"Always!" cried Neville Joyce. "I don't have to ask anybody to get off. My old aunt never stands between me and my wishes, and, besides, I guess she'd rather have me away, anyhow. One less mouth to feed, you know, Jack."

The boys laughed in unison.

In a short time Colonel Willoughby came back and began bustling about his office. Suddenly he paused and looked at Jack, who was watching him with undisguised anxiety.

"Of course you've heard the news?" said he.

"About Napoleon? Yes."

"Elba has given up its prisoner," continued the gallant soldier. "I am ordered to the Guards at once, and start without delay."

"But you'll have time to talk to father——"

"Oh, I encountered him on my way here. I am going to take you along, Jack."

The young Briton clapped his hands with joy.

"Get ready at once," continued the Colonel. "There's no time to be lost. The Guards are near Brussels, and we mustn't let grass grow under our feet."

"I assure you that none shall grow under mine!" and Jack sprang to the door. On the threshold he thought of Neville. He stopped and looked back at his warrior uncle.

"You couldn't use another boy, Uncle Cecil?"

"What boy?"

"Neville Joyce, my playmate from childhood."

"Well, maybe you'd fight better if you had company," smiled the brave officer. "Tell him to come along. I think I can promise both of you all the adventure you want."

"Thank you, Uncle Cecil," and Jack was off.

As he turned into one of the large squares of London, he nearly collided with his chum.

"It's all right, Neville!" he exclaimed. "We're both going out with Uncle Cecil. Hurrah! We may have a chance to show Napoleon what British boys are made of."

"I'll do my best in that direction, Jack. When do we start?"

"This very day. Get your things together, but don't take any trunks along."

"I've got none to take," grinned Neville Joyce. "Aunt Mary says a boy needs nothing but what he has on his back."

"Good for Aunt Mary!" laughed Jack, and they parted at a fountain with mutual promises to meet at Colonel Willoughby's in an hour, ready for the great events that were soon to startle the world.

There were no steam cars in those days to hurry troops to the seat of war. They had to be dispatched by other methods, and now that the nations had to confront Napoleon once more, the utmost haste was needed.

It was already known that nearly all the nations would be allies against the man of Austerlitz and Wagram, that Napoleon would be joined by thousands of his old soldiers who had fought in some of the great battles of history, and that the fate of Europe trembled in the balances.

In due course of time Jack Winslow joined the Life Guardsmen in their camp near Brussels. It was a scene that thrilled him and his chum. Everything they saw meant war. Thousands of troops covered the hills and plains; it was said that already the banished Emperor was advancing to give his enemies battle, for he had collected an immense army composed of old veterans, and all knew that it was to be a fight to the death.

Jack had donned his new uniform, which he very much admired, for it was the handsome one worn by the Life Guards, and its scarlet was almost glittering in its brightness.

"You make a dandy-looking Guard," remarked an old soldier, whose mustache was immense, and he stopped Jack and surveyed him with his little gray eyes.

"I am going to try to be a soldier," was the reply.

"Well, you'll soon have good schooling," smiled Old Moustache, as the veteran was called.

"That's what I came out for."

"Can you ride?"

"I've broken colts for Uncle Cecil. Do you think the French will fight?"

Old Moustache tossed his head and laughed.

"Fight?" he ejaculated. "Well, I guess they will fight. I hope you don't think the men who have been in a thousand battles with Bonaparte are marching this way for fun? They are joining him by the thousands. He's got Ney with him and all the rest of the war gods of the wars. Fight? In a few days you'll see fighting enough to last you a lifetime," and he walked away with a curling of his hidden lips.

As the city of Brussels was not far off, Jack and Neville obtained permission to visit it. They passed the gate as the sun was about to sink below the western horizon, and soon found themselves in the darkened streets of the famous Belgium capital.

It fairly swarmed with the red-coated soldiers of England, with a sprinkling of veterans of other nations, and the two boys opened their eyes with amazement.

As they passed a public house, they heard the sound of music, and, seeing a great many people under the garish lights in the large taproom, they made bold to enter. They sought a secluded corner, where they were screened from observation, and proceeded to watch the throng.

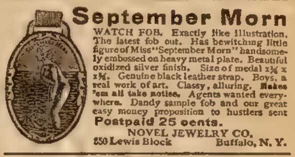
"I guess we'd better go," said a low voice near them. "We've got our information budget filled, and the General will be waiting."

The words thrilled Jack Winslow, for he heard them plainly. As he looked over his shoulder he saw two men quitting the place. He nudged Neville and caught his eye.

"Those fellows are here for no good," he whispered. "I don't like their looks. They may be spies for Napoleon, for it is said he has spies even now in Brussels——"

"Let us follow them," broke in Neville.

The two boys turned towards the en-



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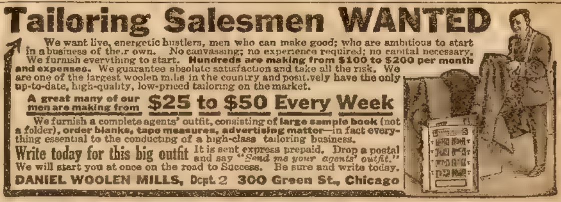

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trance and set after the suspected men. They had scarcely reached the pavement when they found themselves confronted by the couple.

"See here!" hissed one of the pair, fastening two flashing eyes on the young Guards, "what are you following us for?"

The boys were silent.

"We'll twist your necks, you young jackanapes!" continued the man. "You look like two roosters in red and——"

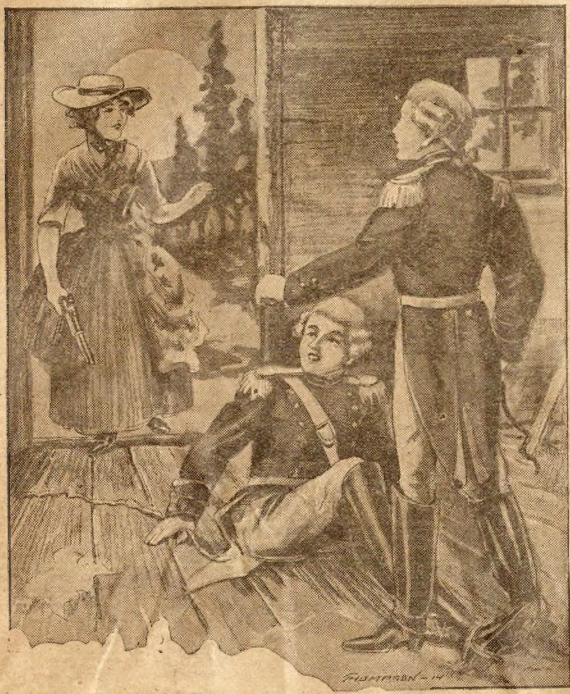
"We are Life Guardsmen," interrupted Jack, proudly.

"Well, you won't be that long, if you dog us," was the retort. "I am Max Molitz at your service, and you'll see us later on," and with this the twain bounded into the darkness, leaving Jack and Neville to have confirmed their suspicions that the rascals were Napoleon's spies.

CHAPTER II.

THE HUT IN THE FOREST.

I WONDER how many dangers lurk in this terrible forest?" said Jack Winslow, as he drew rein the following evening a few miles south of Brussels in the Forest of Soignes, which lay in Wellington's route to Waterloo.



The boys looked into the face of a young girl.

He spoke to Neville, who was mounted like himself, but they were not alone.

"It looks ghostly enough to have a thousand terrors," returned his young companion. "Old Moustache told us to remain here till he came back, but I don't like the situation."

"There isn't a habitation in sight," Jack went on, looking around for the twentieth time. "I heard in the city that a band of outlaws make this place their rendezvous, and I rather wish I had not consented to come out on this scout."

Neville dropped his head and said nothing.

Old Moustache had headed a small party of scouts for the purpose of reconnoitering in advance of the main army, which was making ready to move forward to meet Napoleon.

"There's a light!" suddenly exclaimed Jack, pointing to the right. "It flashed up like a match, but it is gone now."

"A will-o'-the-wisp, doubtless," said Neville.

"I hardly think so. Let us do a little reconnoitering for ourselves," and the boys looked to the priming of their pistols and rode forward in the direction indicated by Jack.

By this time the sun had gone down, rendering the famous forest gloomier than ever, and even some of the trees had grown indistinct.

"As I live, yonder is a hut," suddenly exclaimed Jack. "Some people are not afraid to live in this devil-woods."

The boys now moved forward with the utmost caution, for they were on dangerous ground. They were midway between Napoleon's advance and Wellington's van.

"Look! a light," whispered Neville, clutching Jack's sleeve. "If we only had Old Moustache and the others with us——"

"Hist! There are figures where the light is."

This was now apparent, and the young Guardsmen halted and leaned toward the hut with their fingers on the trigger.

"I'm going to see the end of this adventure," breathed Jack, throwing one leg over the saddle. "It is possible that some rascality is afoot by the enemy."

They dismounted and tied their horses to small trees and crept towards the lonely hut, the door of which was open.

By the light of a candle set in a block of wood on a rough table they made out the forms of four hard-looking men, whose heads were close together like a quartet of conspirators. These fellows were clad in coarse homespun, and looked for all the world like outlaws. Their faces were swarthy and fierce-looking, and they had great hands, like robbers of the woods.

On the table lay a bit of parchment like a map, and one of the men was tracing an imaginary line with his index finger. His companions watched him attentively.

Some underbrush in front of the hut concealed the two young soldiers, and they were using their eyes to the best advantage.

All at once a slight noise behind the boys startled them, and a second later they were pounced upon by three men who beat their pistols down before they could make the slightest efforts at defense.

"Caught napping, eh?" growled the leader of the three, as he glared at the captives. "This is a pretty catch, as I live! Hold your bird tight, Jules. We'll soon finish them."

It was useless for Jack and Neville to struggle, for the clutch of fate was decidedly against them, and they were dragged forward and thrown on the floor of the old hut, to the amazement of its occupants.

"Who have we here?" cried the biggest fellow of the lot, as he leaped to his feet and stared at our friends.

"Some eavesdroppers, of course," was the answer. "Don't you see by their uniforms that they are Wellington's birds?"

"So they are."

"Shut the door there, Felixe," commanded another ruffian. "We don't often land fish like these."

The door was slammed to and secured.

The two boys were pulled to their feet, and then made to occupy a bench which ran along the back wall.

"Out on a little lark, eh?" said the leader, leering madly at the boy prisoners. "Doing a little work for the Iron Duke?"

The boys met the man's gaze unflinchingly.

"We are soldiers under Wellington," said Jack.

"I thought so."

"You are not soldiers, and therefore have no right to hold us."

"Might makes right," was the unfeeling answer. "We hate everything dressed in red."

Jack's gaze fell, and he shuddered.

"Where are your companions?" was the next demand. "Surely you boys haven't invaded the Forest of Soignes alone?"

"You will have that question answered erelong unless we are at once set free."

"Ho, ho!" was the reply. "We are to be overwhelmed by a band of your friends? Well, boys," he addressed his companions. "I don't see why we shouldn't make an example of these young foxes."

"Neither do we, Captain," voiced the others.

The chief of the band again turned to the boys.

"How many men has the Iron Duke?" he asked.

"We never counted them," replied Jack.

"Where is Blucher now?"

General Blucher commanded the Germans who were operating with Wellington, who commanded the allied armies against Napoleon.

"We are not concerned about Blucher," Jack said, after a moment of reflection.

"Well, we are," retorted the outlaw. "We give you three minutes to tell us all you know," and the speaker pulled out a silver watch which he placed dial upwards on the table.

Three minutes! The boys exchanged rapid glances. They saw no mercy in the tigerish eyes before them. They knew that the men of the Forest of Soignes would not hesitate to commit murder if such a crime suited their purpose. Jack and Neville were thinking

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along the same line. Where was Old Moustache?

"Aren't you going to chirp?" cried the head villain. "We can't stay here all night."

There was no reply.

"Very well. Tie their hands, my lads."

It did not take long to do this. Ropes were forthcoming and in a few moments the boys were bound and cast helpless on the rough floor.

"Now gag the young rascals."

This ceremony was accomplished in no gentle manner, and then the light was held close to the captives to see that the work had been well done.

"You may be thankful that your lives are spared," leered the foremost ruffian. "You will never be found here by the enemy. Wellington will pass down the main road south, and nobody will think of looking for you in this greenwood palace."

There was a brutal laugh at this expression, and one of the men took up the candle and extinguished it. The hut was instantly wrapped in darkness. The boys could hear the trampling of feet as the outlaws took their departure, and then silence swooped down to render their situation the more perilous.

The cruel gags in their mouths prevented speech. They could only roll against each other, and thus silently express their sympathy.

They felt that the outlaws would find their horses and take possession of them, thus leading Old Moustache to believe that they had gone back to the army. They had been left to die in that lonely hut, to perish miserably in a spot where their bones would never be found. Was it for this that they had come out from Merrie England with high hopes? The very thought was the bitterness of death.

Moments of the intensest agony passed. They heard a cricket in the old shack, and then the lonely hoot of an owl assailed their ears. Jack groaned inwardly and tugged at his bonds, but without avail.

Not far away was the road which led toward the village of Waterloo, and the boys imagined it packed with Wellington's men, as they pushed forward to decide the fate of Europe. They wondered if any of the outlaws had been left on guard.

"We must not die here," ran constantly through Jack's mind. "I must be in at the finish. I did not come out with Uncle Cecil to perish like a rat in a trap."

He began to tug anew at his bonds. He exerted every muscle and put forth every effort. His veins swelled almost to bursting, and he felt his blood grow hot. At last he thought he felt the cords yield.

He tried again, and then his heart took a great leap in his bosom. They had given a little. At last he wrenched one hand loose. In another instant he had freed his mouth from the gag.

"I am free, Neville!" he cried. "Now for liberty!"

Working in the dark was no child's play. Jack tugged at Neville's bonds till they were both free.

"I guess we won't oblige the rascals by dying here," he exclaimed. "Hark! what was that?"

The door of the old hut had been thrown suddenly open. A light flashed in their faces.

"Who spoke?" said a strange voice, and the boys looked into the face of a young girl who leaned forward with a cocked pistol in her right hand.

CHAPTER III.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

A RATHER comely face framed with flaxen hair, a pair of deep, penetrating eyes and a splendid girlish figure —this was what the boys saw in the rude doorway. The stranger leaned forward and peered at the singular sight before her.

"Who are you?" she asked, in fairly good English, as a smile gathered on her lips.

Jack and his companion exchanged looks.

"We have been prisoners of a lot of ruffians," answered the former, "but we have managed to liberate ourselves, as you see."

The girl came in, the same curious stare in her eyes.

"I am Trix," she said. "I live not far off. I have been hunting our cattle that have strayed or have been taken by the soldiers."

"Just as though soldiers would take cattle!" chuckled Jack. "We will let you hunt them unmolested," and he and Neville moved toward the entrance.

But all at once the girl retreated to the door and set her body firmly therein.

"You are English, are you not?" she asked.

"Yes, we belong to Wellington's army."

'They are marching down the road yonder. It is not far away. There is going to be a great battle."

"That is what we have come out for. Napoleon has escaped from Elba, and we are going to make an end of him."

The girl shook her head doubtingly.

"You will have your hands full, I fear," she said. "The men of the forest are flocking to Napoleon's banners."

"If you mean the fellows who caught us and made us prisoners, I don't think Bonaparte will find them of much use, for they are the veriest cowards. We will return to our horses——"

"There are no horses in this vicinity," put in Trix. "I saw two men riding army steeds as I came up."

An outburst of indignation fell from Jack's lips.

"Just as I expected!" he exclaimed. "We will have to take it afoot."

"Well, you look nimble enough to walk," laughed the girl. "This hut belongs to Max."

"I've heard that name before," Jack answered. "We encountered the men in Brussels, and one called himself Max Moritz."

"That is the man."

"Who is he and what does he do?"

"He isn't a saint," grinned the girl. "I fancy he is serving the Little Corporal now."

"Just what I thought. You mean that he is one of Napoleon's spies?"

Trix nodded.

"Then we are likely to meet him again," returned Jack. "I would like to settle affairs with Max."

At this the girl made way for them to leave the hut, which they promptly did, and found themselves in the dark forest.

"Are you for Napoleon?" he suddenly asked, turning to the girl, who was dimly seen.

"I pretend to be," was the strange answer.

"But at heart you are against him?"

"I am."

Jack held out his hand, which the girl took with a firm pressure. He looked into her face and read determination there.

"Come, Neville," said he. "We must rejoin the army. No doubt Old Moustache has given us up for lost," and they hastened toward the road, the location of which the girl had pointed out to them.

They had not gone far when Neville seized Jack's sleeve and drew him aside

"Look yonder," he whispered. "There is an opening in the forest. I see forms between us and the sky."

"Sure enough," was the reply. 'This old wood must be haunted."

"Not by ghosts, at any rate," Neville said. "What are those fellows doing?"

As the boys were totally unarmed, they could not be expected to make a fight, therefore they must needs keep aloof from another predicament.

Eager to see what was really before them, they advanced with the utmost caution, and at length dropped upon their knees. In a little open place they discerned the figures of five men who were huddled together. One was handling a spade, while the others looked on.

"They're digging a grave," whispered Jack.

"But I see no one to fill it."

At that moment the man with the spade flung the implement down and confronted his companions.

"It's finished now," the young Guardsmen heard him say, with evident satisfaction. "Bring on your prisoner."

At this two additional men made their appearance, having between them a British officer under guard.

"We make short work of you invaders," one of the rascals said to the prisoner, in gruff tones. "We won't let the Emperor have a chance at you."

The officer drew himself to his true height and looked fearlessly at his captors.

"A British soldier does not fear to die," said he, in haughty tones. "I hate to fall at the hands of a lot of cutthroats, but vengeance will overtake every one of you in time."

"Silence!" roared the head of the band. "We don't want any sermon just now."

The prisoner pursed his lips and was silent.

"Stand him at the brink of his grave, men. I have the pistol ready for the redcoat."

The two boys heard the ominous clicking of a weapon's lock.

"No time is to be lost, Neville," said Jack, whose heart was beating a tattoo in his bosom, and then he sprang to his feet.

"Forward, men!" he cried in stentorian tones. "Down with the wolves of Soignes!"

His voice acted like magic. The forest wolves fell back with startling cries.

"Cut them down!" vociferated Jack, making all the noise he could. "No quarter for the villains!"

At this every rascal took to his heels, leaving the officer amazed at the brink of his own grave.

"That wasn't so bad," remarked Jack, appearing suddenly before the rescued man. "They are cowards at heart——"

"As all such men are," was the interruption. "I was a fool to stray from the ranks. They pounced upon me like a flock of vultures, and before I could resist I was in their hands."

"But you're safe now."

"And thanks to you, my lads. I am Major Scott of the Royal Dragoons."

"We belong to Colonel Willoughby's staff," responded Jack, taking the hand that was held out to him. "We are glad, Major, to have come in the nick of time, and had we been armed, some of the rascals would have paid the penalty."

Major Scott was profuse with his thanks, and all started toward the road traversed by the army. Jack related their adventures, to which narrative the officer listened with unabated interest.

"I shall never forget the debt I owe you lads," said he. "Sometime you will be well repaid, for a Scott always pays a debt of gratitude."

Wellington's army, filing through the night, was soon reached, and all at once Jack felt his arm clutched and heard a loud voice.

"What happened to you lads? We came back and found you missing, and thought you had fallen into the hands of the robbers of Soignes."

It was Old Moustache who spoke.

"They did get us," smiled Jack Winslow, looking up into the bearded face. "We thought we would never see the banners of St. George again, but fortune smiled and—and here we are."

"We ran pellmell into the horde," continued Old Moustache. "We fixed several of them, but the others got away."

Colonel Willoughby was most delighted to see his young aides again.

"You must be careful," said he, with a smile. "We don't want to lose you boys to a pack of forest marauders. We will meet a braver enemy erelong, and there will be excitement enough. By the way, Jack, I have just received a letter that may deeply interest you."

"A letter from home?"

"Yes,"

Colonel Willoughby drew the missive from his pocket, and calling to a soldier, ordered him to light a candle.

"Read for yourself, boy," he went on, handing Jack the letter. "I guess after you have read you will prefer to go home. Dead people have no use for a nice fortune, you know."

Jack's features lit up with surprise as he silently read what was written on the page. The letter informed him that his grandfather had just died, and that he was to receive the sum of five thousand pounds, or twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Well?" said the Colonel, when Jack looked up. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I will give you your freedom from the army at once and send you back."

"I'm not going, Uncle Cecil!" exclaimed Jack, setting his feet firmly on the

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ground. "I came out here to fight. When we have whipped Napoleon, I will go home and take the legacy, and not a moment before."

"I like your spirit, my boy. I always said you'd make a soldier," and patting Jack on the shoulder, Colonel Willoughby turned away.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this most interesting story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Not Hungry.

They were on the subject of girls.

"Look here!" exclaimed McFarland. "Did you ever take a girl out to lunch when she felt a little faint?"

"Er—no," admitted Smith, reluctantly.

"Well," take my advice and don't. One day I took Miss Jennie Westcott into a restaurant. At first she declined to eat anything, but then she said she believed she did feel a little faint."

"Did she take anything?"

"Did she take anything? She seized the menu, glanced over it, said she didn't feel very hungry, and ordered——"

"Well, what did she order?"

"Oysters, bouillon, lobster, cutlets, sweetbreads and peas, chicken, shrimp salad, biscuit glace, macaroons, coffee and creme de menthe. It cost me three dollars."

"Well, you ought to be glad," said Smith.

"Glad? What for?"

"Why, glad she wasn't hungry."

* * *

A Small Order.

Trade was bad, very bad; and Mr. Buggins, the chief grocer of the district, found his takings becoming smaller every day. All his old customers seemed to be leaving the neighborhood, and no new ones arriving. Even old Mrs. Robinson, to whom the firm of Buggins had supplied the necessaries of life for many years, had not been near the shop for weeks.

One morning, however, she again entered the door, and Mr. Buggins, delighted, hastened to attend to her in person.

"And what may I get for you today?" he inquired.

"A cent's worth of soap," came the reply.

Mr. Buggins' face was wonderfully expressive of outraged feelings; so was his answer.

"A cent's worth of soap!" he retorted. "Certainly, I suppose you'll be washing the canary this afternoon."

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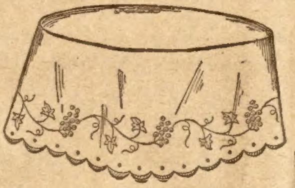
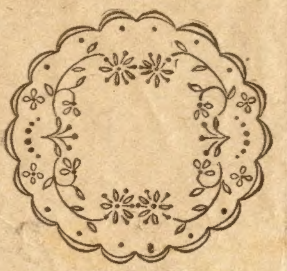


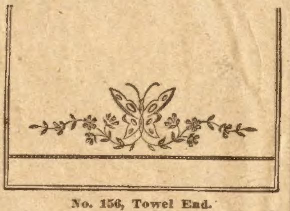
No. 154, Table Cover.

NO. 154, TABLE COVER.—The neat table cover design is to be worked in solid, outline, and buttonhole embroidery. Same comes stamped on fine quality Irish (Union) linen, size 36x36 inches, and includes eighteen skeins embroidery cotton for working. Given free with a $2.00 subscription to the Blade and the Ledger.



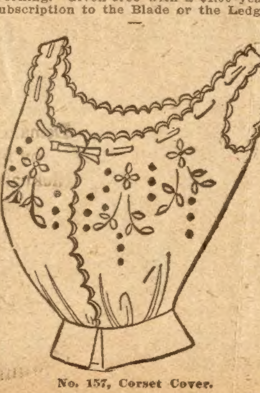
No. 155, Centerpiece.

NO. 155, CENTERPIECE.—This simple centerpiece design is to be worked in solid, outline, and buttonhole embroidery, and is stamped on fine quality pure imported white linen, size 22x22 inches, including six skeins embroidery cotton for working. Given free with a $1.00 year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.



No. 156, Towel End.

NO. 156, TOWEL END.—This beautiful towel end, butterfly design, is to be done in outline and solid embroidery. Same comes stamped on huckaback, size 15x24 inches, and includes necessary cotton for working. Given free with a $1.00 year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.



No. 157, Corset Cover.

NO. 157, CORSET COVER.—This corset cover design is to be worked in solid and outline buttonhole embroidery. Eyelet embroidery may be used in place of solid. The design comes stamped on fine quality nainsook, and includes six skeins white embroidery cotton for working. Given free with a $1.00 year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.

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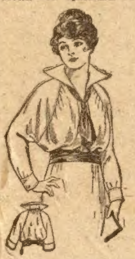
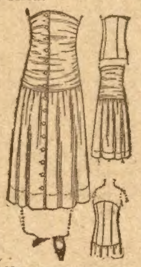
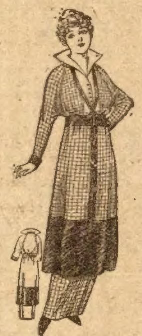


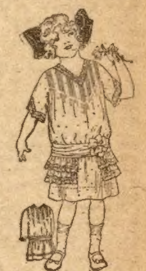
8367 Raglan Blouse, 34 to 44 bust.



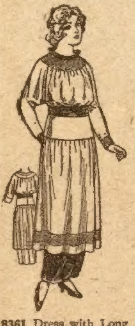
8378 Gathered Tunic with Basque Girdle, 24 to 30 waist.



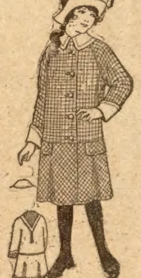
8377 Gown with Deep Tunic, 34 to 42 bust.



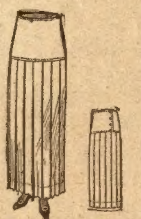
8360 Girl's Kimono Dress, 4 to 8 years.



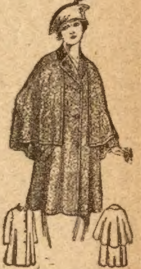
8361 Dress with Long Tunic for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 13 years.



8376 Girl's Coat with Circular Skirt, 10 to 14 years.



8357 Box Plaited Skirt, 24 to 32 waist.



8354 Cape Coat, Small 34 or 36, Medium 33 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust.

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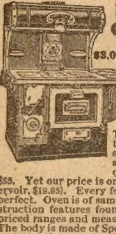

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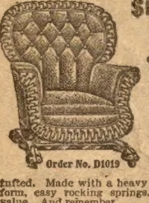

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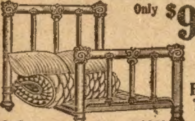

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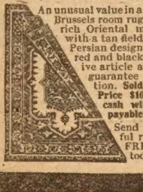

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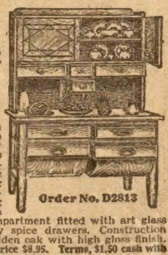

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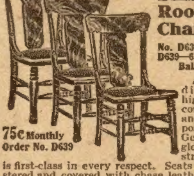

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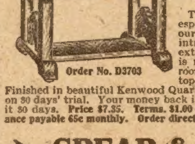

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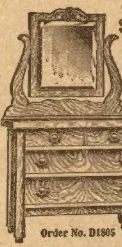

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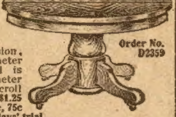

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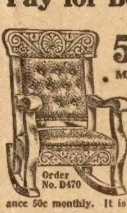

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A new high-grade parlor rocker, graceful design, hardwood frame, embossed front and top panels. May be had in either genuine golden oak or mahoganized birch finish. The covering is a high grade Spanish leatherette made with a deep spring seat and neatly tufted back. Sold under our guarantee. **Shipped on 30 days' trial. Price $5.65. Terms, 75c cash with order. Balance 50c monthly.** It is

A Startling Value!

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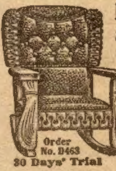
Fine Rocker at a Bargain



Order No. D463

30 Days' Trial

Most attractive parlor rocker ever produced at such a low price.

$3.65 only

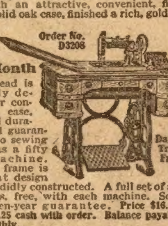
50c Per Month

Made of genuine solid golden oak, high gloss finish, wide arms, heavy front posts and sweeps. Covered with durable black Sylvan leather with a deep spring seat, fancy ruffled front and back, with dainty rosettes at the top. A remarkable value which we guarantee to give satisfaction. **Shipped on 30 days' trial. Price $3.65. Terms, 75c cash with order, balance 50c monthly.**

Your money back if you're not satisfied with any article

Our high-grade Steinway sewing machine, made with an attractive, convenient, five drawer, solid oak case, finished a rich, golden gloss.

$1 a Month



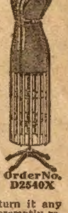
Order No. D3208

30 Days' Trial Free

Sewing head is especially designed for convenience, ease, speed and durability and guaranteed to do sewing as well as a fifty dollar machine. The iron frame is of a neat design and splendidly constructed. A full set of attachments, free, with each machine. Sold with a ten-year guarantee. **Price $16.85. Terms, $2.25 cash with order. Balance payable $1.00 monthly.**

ADJUSTABLE Dress Form

75c Monthly



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Spear's Latest "Crown" Adjustable Dress Form is a wonder. Makes dressmaking easy and a pleasure. Helps you to dress in up-to-date fashion at small cost. Eliminates the discomfort of being fitted. Quickly solves every difficulty and does away with guesswork, disappointment, and saves expense and waste of valuable material.

The following adjustments are possible: Bust measure, 31 to 46 in.; Neck measure, 12 to 17½ in.; Waist measure, 22½ to 37 in.; Hips, 34 to 48 in.; Waist length, 12 to 16 in.; Shoulder length, 4½ to 6 in. **Price, $12.45. Placed in your home for $1.50 cash with order and you pay only 75c a month.**

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